

# Economic Implications of the Deuteronomic Reform and the Elimination of the Goddess Asherah.

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# Statement of Sources

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*This thesis contains no material published elsewhere or extracted in whole or in part from a thesis by which I have qualified for or been awarded another degree or diploma.*

*No parts of this thesis have been submitted towards the award of any other degree or diploma in any other tertiary institution.*

*No other person's work has been used without due acknowledgment in the main text of the thesis.*

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*Date*

# Abstract

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This thesis explores the economic rationale behind the Deuteronomistic reforms of centralisation and aniconism, as demonstrated through the biblical texts and extra-biblical material. The aniconistic centralised Temple complex promoted by Dtr was a repository of wealth, power, and influence, which was threatened by the iconographic system of shrines and temples spread throughout the Judahite and Israelite areas. This is evidenced through the economic underpinnings of the society which have contributed to these 'reforms', such as the development of an ethnos Israel and the fiscal manipulation of the temple complex and system of tithing. The iconography of the goddess Asherah is used as an example of this, but other forms of iconography associated with the early cult of YHWH are also considered.

# Statement of Appreciation

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I would like to thank the following people for the support that they have given me throughout my degree:

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# Abbreviations

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Abbreviations in this thesis have intentionally been used sparingly. Only the most well-known of journal and book titles have been abbreviated, and only where necessary.

*BAR – Biblical Archaeology Review.*

*BASOR – Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research.*

BDB - Brown, Francis, S.R. Driver and Charles A. Briggs. *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*. Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 1996.

*JANER – Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Religions.*

*JBL – Journal of Biblical Literature.*

*JSOT – Journal for the Study of the Old Testament.*

KTU – de Moor, Johannes C. and Klaas Spronk. *A Cuneiform Anthology of Religious Texts from Ugarit*. Leiden: Brill, 1987.

*SJOT – Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament.*

*VT – Vetus Testamentum.*

All biblical citations in this work come from the following translation, except where specified:

The Jewish Publication Society. *JPS Hebrew-English Tanakh. The Traditional Hebrew Text and the New JPS Translation*. Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2000.

# Introduction.

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Three times a year all your males shall appear before Yahweh your God at the place which he will choose: at the feast of unleavened bread, at the feast of weeks, at the feast of booths. They shall not appear before Yahweh empty-handed. (Deut. 16:16)

The “empty-handedness” of Deut. 16:16 implies an obligation to tithe. Furthermore, this tithe is to be presented at “the place which he (YHWH) will choose.” Such an obligation was the construct of the authors of the text, forcing a new social order and set of cultic stipulations onto a group of people known as the Israelites. This thesis aims to demonstrate what it perceives to be a considerable gap in current scholarship regarding certain aspects of the Deuteronomistic reform. The specific focus of this thesis is to determine an underlying economic motive for the reforms of the Deuteronomists (hereafter Dtr). In particular the manner in which the ambitions of a completely aniconistic monotheism and centralised cult were to be achieved, especially as they pertain to the elimination of iconography from the cult of Israel and Judah. Where previous scholarship has stressed the religious, if not pious motivations behind such goals, and notwithstanding the significance of such motives, this thesis aims to highlight and make explicit the economic rationale behind this reform agenda. Such economic motives have been noted by Claburn, who observes the following:

Thus one can further ask, “Could it be that somewhere behind all that grisly, rampaging, sanctuary-smashing piety of Josiah somebody was out to get something more substantial than somebody else’s deity symbols? If so, who was after what from whom?”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> W. Eugene Claburn, “The Fiscal Basis of Josiah’s Reforms,” *JBL* 92.1 (March 1973), 14. This is also noted by Douglas A. Knight, “Whose Agony? Whose Ecstasy? The Politics of Deuteronomic Law,” in *Shall not the Judge of all the Earth do What is Right? Studies on the Nature of God in Tribute to James L. Crenshaw*, edited by David Penchansky and Paul L. Redditt, (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2000), 97-100.

The reform agenda championed by Dtr sought to eliminate or reform shrines and high places (*bāmôth*), tauromorph imagery, *maššeboth*, the goddess Asherah and her cultic symbols, aniconistic policy, tithes and centralisation. Only recently have scholars begun to insist that such iconography and practice were in fact ‘traditional’, as reflected in 1 Kings 12, and that the aniconistic Deuteronomistic reform was the agency which attempted to alter it.<sup>2</sup> Through an analysis of each of these elements it will be possible to observe the way in which these aspects of cult were originally a legitimate part of what is increasingly recognised to have been a widely diverse ancient Israelite cultic milieu. This analysis will focus on an holistic consideration of Dtr’s treatment of iconography in order to address the limitations of previous work. To this end, this thesis will posit that alongside religious motives sit economic incentives which, if not dominant, are at least significant in driving changes and development in various stages of ancient Israelite history.

This thesis will utilise rhetorical and historical-critical methodology in order to broadly critically analyse the biblical, epigraphical and archaeological evidence that deals with the historical circumstances and agencies that influenced the following issues:

- Religious reform in ancient Israel in the period c. 800-500 BCE;
- The centralisation and control of worship and taxation/tithes;
- The elimination of the cult of Asherah;
- The connection between YHWH and the Canaanite El;
- The movement towards aniconistic monolatry and monotheism;

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<sup>2</sup> Mark S. Smith, *The Early History of God, Yahweh and the Other Deities in Ancient Israel*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2002), 83-85; Brian B. Schmidt, “The Aniconic Tradition: On Reading Images and Viewing Texts,” in *The Triumph of Elohîm*, edited by Diana Vikander Edelman, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1995), 87-88; a middle ground is favoured by Miller, *The Religion of Ancient Israel*, (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000), 16-22.

Essential to this inquiry is an analysis of primary biblical texts that have issued from the scribal activity of what has been termed in scholarship as the Deuteronomistic School. This textual analysis should enable a practicable working identification of the theological stance of the creators and redactors of texts that both came to being in the period c. 800-500 BCE. The task of critical analysis will involve engagement with, and response to, past and current scholarship.

The original contribution that this thesis proposes to add to the current research in this area, is to contextualise the above elements, in order to present a balanced holistic view of the factors that launched and propelled Dtr's reform. In order to elucidate this theme, it is necessary for the argument to progress in the following logical order:

Chapter 1 will outline the debate regarding the identity and intentions of Dtr and will explore some of the possible economic concerns associated with particular theories. Such an identification is necessary, if it is to be claimed that Dtr were the primary driving factor in any reform movement or (re-)construction of Israelite identity.

Chapter 2 will provide a platform of identity for ancient Israel and Judah. It will consider the ethnogenesis of the people 'Israel', and the problems which arise from an over-reliance on the biblical texts, in determining this identity. The heterodox nature of pre-Deuteronomistic Israel and the way in which this was altered by Dtr's reform measures will be considered, especially in light of the intentions of the Deuteronomistic reform in forging a new or revised religious identity for a group which they classify as 'Israelites' as distinct from 'Canaanites'.

Chapter 3 will begin to examine some of the aspects of cult in ancient Israel and Judah that were reformed by the Deuteronomists. The items covered in this chapter will be dealt with together because they form part of the same iconoclastic reform - *maššeboth* and bull or calf statues are most commonly found in sites identified as *bāmôth*, and the following examination will demonstrate that these aspects of early Israelite cult were affected simultaneously by the drive toward centralisation at the Temple. The determination of Dtr to alter the *practice* of religion for 'Israel' will be demonstrated throughout this analysis.

Chapter 4 discusses tithing in the biblical text and also touches on the extra-biblical record. The heavy focus on tithing, especially tithing to the Levites, presented throughout the Deuteronomistic History (hereafter DH) indicates that issues such as tithing and the welfare of the Levites were of particular concern for Dtr. That tithes functioned as a method of taxation is dealt with briefly in chapter 3, and developed further in chapter 4. This overlap is the natural result of the endemic nature of the tithe in ANE society.

Chapter 5 will consider the topic of aniconism, its development, and the possible economic rationale underpinning its gradual permeation of ancient Israelite society. This will be considered in light of the discussions undertaken in chapters 3 and 4, in order to demonstrate that aniconism was an essential aspect of the centralisation policy of Dtr. The link between the item and the deity it represented will also be considered in this context, as it is this association which posed the greatest threat to Dtr's policies by providing portable representations which could facilitate the establishment of other religious sites away from the central sanctuary. This emphasis is particularly strong in the account of Jeroboam's sin in 1 Kings 12:25-33.

Chapter 6 provides an analysis of Asherah, her cultic paraphernalia (such as the *asherim*), and the polemics levelled against her during the reforms. Such a focus will demonstrate that not only were Asherah and her iconography widespread and legitimate aspects of the ancient cultus of Israel and Judah, but that it is this very widespread nature which, like the *maššeboth* and *bāmôth* discussed in the preceding chapters, posed a threat to the fulfilment of Dtr's ambitions.

In this way this thesis hopes to address the possible economic rationale underpinning the Deuteronomistic desire for an aniconistic cult centred exclusively on the Jerusalem Temple complex. In doing so it will demonstrate that what is meant by the stipulation to "not appear before Yahweh empty-handed" is an injunction to present all tithes and offerings to the Deuteronomistically approved central sanctuary. These changes are a reflection of the policy of Dtr which sought to provide a centralised point of worship, and which also served as a central point of collection for the tithes and taxes which previously would have been distributed between temples and sanctuaries spread throughout the area. The aniconistic policy in particular reflects an attempt to prevent the re-establishment of these institutions.

# I. The Deuteronomists.

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According to the biblical tradition, king Hezekiah of Judah instigated (c. 715 BCE), but did not fully carry through, a series of reforms aimed at: i) reinforcing the worship of YHWH as an aniconistic cult, and ii) centralising it on the Temple of Jerusalem. Almost a century later (c. 633 BCE), king Josiah expanded upon these reforms, carrying out an iconoclastic campaign and rearranging the sacrificial, judicial, and financial laws of Israel and Judah in the process.<sup>1</sup> These reforms are termed the Josianic or Deuteronomistic reforms, after the school of thought or guild of scribes who drove the movement for a renewed fidelity to the Mosaic Law and were responsible for the book of Deuteronomy, the Deuteronomistic History (DH) and subsequent redactional activity designed to underpin their ideology.<sup>2</sup> But who were these Deuteronomists? From a point of view of material culture such reforms are shrouded in mystery, and the group credited with them remain stubbornly elusive.<sup>3</sup>

Deuteronomy and the DH put forward an ideology of a centralised aniconistic monotheism. These ideologies can be gleaned from an assessment of Deuteronomy and the DH, especially when compared to texts which detail practices which are contradictory to

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<sup>1</sup> Judiciary, Deut. 16:18-19, 17:8-13; Sacrifice, Deut. 12:13-27, 16:5-7; Finance, Deut. 23:19-20, 16:2, 12.

<sup>2</sup> For example Thomas Römer, "Is there a Deuteronomistic Redaction in the Book of Jeremiah?," in *Israel Constructs Its History: Deuteronomistic Historiography in Recent Research*, edited by Albert de Pury, Thomas Römer and Jean-Daniel Macchi, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 399, and *The So-Called Deuteronomistic History*, (New York: T&T Clark, 2007), 13-43; Mark O'Brien, *The Deuteronomistic History Hypothesis: A Reassessment*, (Friburg: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht Gottingen, 1989), 3-23; Antony Campbell and Mark O'Brien, *Unfolding the Deuteronomistic History*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 2-4; Brian Neil Peterson, *The Authors of the Deuteronomistic History: Locating a Tradition in Ancient Israel*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014), 1-4.

<sup>3</sup> As is outlined in the volumes *Those Elusive Deuteronomists: The Phenomenon of Pan-Deuteronomism*, edited by Linda S. Shearing and Steven L. McKenzie, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999); Römer, *The So-Called Deuteronomistic History*; Peter T. Vogt, *Deuteronomic Theology and the Significance of Torah. A Reappraisal*, (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 12-14; Brian Neil Peterson, *The Authors of the Deuteronomistic History*.

these, such as some of those outlined in Leviticus and Numbers.<sup>4</sup> The ideological agenda of Dtr is evident not only through the laws put forward by them in Deuteronomy, but also by their assessment of the kings of Israel and Judah, according to their own legalistic ideological criteria rather than by the socio-political and economic achievements of each of the kings.<sup>5</sup>

It has often been claimed that Dtr exercised a redactional influence on a number of other texts of the Hebrew Bible.<sup>6</sup> Correct identification of such texts, whilst difficult, is essential for establishing the extent of Dtr's influence on the overall final form of the Bible.<sup>7</sup> Falling into the trap of blanket attribution of all and any biblical text to any particular redactor or author can lead only to a cyclical argument.<sup>8</sup> That there is evidence of the hand of the Deuteronomist elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, aside from the DH, will be discussed throughout this chapter.

Without first attempting to glean an understanding of the nature and intentions of the group classified by modern scholarship as Dtr, it is impossible to speculate about their motives. The converse is also true. Without an idea of the end result and processes of their reforms, an identification of Dtr will never be possible. If it is feasible to consider that there was an economic rationale behind the reforms of the time of Josiah or his predecessors,

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<sup>4</sup> While these differences are subtle, they remain in the text. For example, there is a stress on the actions of the Aaronid priests instead of the Levitical priesthood in Lev. 6:8-29.

<sup>5</sup> Of which Omri is an excellent example, 1 Kings 16.

<sup>6</sup> As has been noted by Richard Coggins, "What does Deuteronomistic Mean?," in *Those Elusive Deuteronomists*, 22-23, and John Van Seters, "Is There Evidence of a Dtr Redaction in the Sinai Pericope?," in *Those Elusive Deuteronomists*, 160-170. This has especially been true of the prophets, however as will be seen in the discussion to follow, such redactional activity is minimal.

<sup>7</sup> Such extensive work has been undertaken by Campbell and O'Brien, *Unfolding the Deuteronomistic History*; Antony F. Campbell, *Of Prophets and Kings: A Late Ninth-Century Document (1 Samuel 1-2 Kings 10)*, (Washington, DC: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1986); Peterson, *The Authors of the Deuteronomistic History*; Douglas A. Knight, "Traditio-Historical Criticism: The Development of the Covenant Code," in *Method Matters. Essays on the Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Honor of David L. Petersen*, edited by Joel M. LeMon and Kent Harold Richards, (Boston: Brill, 2010), 97-98, 104-106.

<sup>8</sup> As is demonstrated by Corinne Patton, "Pan-Deuteronomism and the Book of Ezekiel," in *Those Elusive Deuteronomists*, 200-215.

which are considered to be the reforms of Dtr, it is essential to first make an attempt to understand the socio-political makeup of that group, in so far as current data will allow. This chapter seeks to shed some light on the nature of this group, before going into greater detail regarding the iconographical and economic effects, mechanisms and ramifications of their reforms in later chapters.

In recent scholarship it has become common to credit the Deuteronomists with a plethora of reforms or events - from authoring or redacting<sup>9</sup> most of the Torah and even some of the prophetic books, to paring Israelite cultic practices down to an aniconistic minimum.<sup>10</sup> They have been labelled as prophets,<sup>11</sup> Levites, and priests;<sup>12</sup> said to have come

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<sup>9</sup> Depending on one's definition of these terms – for example, the analysis of John Van Seters, "The Deuteronomist – Historian or Redactor? From Simon to the Present," in *Ancient Israel in its Near Eastern Context*, edited by Yairah Amit, Ehud Ben Zvi, Israel Finkelstein and Oded Lipschits, (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 359-373, provides a detailed examination of these. Van Seters notes in particular that conflating the terms 'reviser' and 'redactor' "hopelessly confuses the distinct roles of historian and editor. On the one hand, the Deuteronomist is responsible for giving shape to the work and for the many programmatic passages that give to the work a 'theocratic element in the history of Israel' as a whole (Wellhausen 1973: 235). On the other hand, the Deuteronomistic History is a *revision*, and now 'revision' becomes synonymous with 'redaction'." 368. He goes on to argue in favour of an ideological revision rather than a simple splicing together of already extant texts as can be seen in other areas of the Bible, such as the Pentateuch.

<sup>10</sup> Carl D. Evans, "Cult Images, Royal Policies and the Origins of Aniconism," in *The Pitcher is Broken. Memorial Essays for Gösta W. Ahlström*, edited by Steven W. Holloway and Lowell K. Handy, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 209-210.

<sup>11</sup> Three of these notions, that Dtr could have been prophets, Levites, and northerners are covered simultaneously in E.W. Nicholson, *Deuteronomy and Tradition*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1967), 66-88; *contra* Auld and Kugler who both argue against much Dtr influence on the prophets, with the notable exception of Jeremiah. A. Graeme Auld, "The Deuteronomists and the Former Prophets, or What Makes the Former Prophets Deuteronomistic?," in *Those Elusive Deuteronomists*, 116-126; Robert A. Kugler, "The Deuteronomists and the Latter Prophets," in *Those Elusive Deuteronomists*, 127-144.

<sup>12</sup> While this is an oversimplification, Levites and priests are invariably covered simultaneously, with most scholarship arguing in favour of Levitical authorship over Aaronid priestly influence, as these latter were often associated with the earlier non-Deuteronomistic sacrificial cult. Doorly contends that the difference between the Aaronid and Levitical codes is sacrifice versus social justice. Doorly makes a persuasive point regarding the sacrificial flavour of the Priestly document. William J. Doorly, *Obsession With Justice. The Story of the Deuteronomists*, (New York, Paulist Press, 1994), 153-155. As a matter of interest, Doorly also notes the difference in the portrayal of Moses between the Tetrateuch and the DH. "The Moses of the Tetrateuch... was a multi-faceted person, a man of action, a labor organizer, a miracle worker, a judge, a warrior, a negotiator, and the player of a dozen other roles. In Deuteronomy Moses is the elder statesman who delivers the world's greatest farewell address." 100. He goes on to note the absence of Aaron in the Deuteronomistic document. That Deuteronomy is the work of a Levite has also been discussed by Gerhard von Rad, *Studies in Deuteronomy*, (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1953), 67.

from the north,<sup>13</sup> and were a school of thought working from the time of Hezekiah until the period of restoration after the exile.<sup>14</sup> It may be that this tendency has been taken too far. Some of these theories are plausible while many seem far-fetched and, as Wilson points out, “if everybody is the Deuteronomist, then there may be no Deuteronomist at all.”<sup>15</sup> McKenzie terms this phenomenon pan-deuteronomism, and notes that while it is prevalent in Hebrew Bible studies today it is not necessarily justified. It is far more likely that this impression is imparted from the heavy influence that Dtr had on the literary style of the time, thus pervading other areas of the biblical text.<sup>16</sup> That the Deuteronomists authored the book of Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic History is not in dispute,<sup>17</sup> but once outside of this body of literature, it is difficult to determine what is in itself Deuteronomistic and what is influenced by their style and ideology. Specific redactional layers are also difficult to determine. Van Seters, for example, has concluded that “There is, therefore, no

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<sup>13</sup> Nicholson, *Deuteronomy and Tradition*, 58-82. That the north was the original home and centre of the Yahwistic cult is explored by Philip R. Davies, “The Origin of Biblical Israel,” in *Ancient Israel in its Near Eastern Context*, 141-148.

<sup>14</sup> Following the dating theory of Smend “The Law and the Nations. A Contribution to Deuteronomistic Tradition History,” in *Reconsidering Israel and Judah. Recent Studies on the Deuteronomistic History*, edited by Gary N. Knoppers and J. Gordon McConville, (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2000), 95-110. Smend notes that Dtr’s work “was not complete even with DtrN”, 107, and that the Deuteronomists engaged in a “systematic reworking” of the DH, 110. That the DH was the work of many authors or redactors is refuted by Knoppers, who notes that “The disadvantages of multiple authorship therefore seem to outweigh the advantages, because the interpreter is obliged to account for both the complication (or perpetuation) of style and the multiplication of incoherence.” Gary N. Knoppers, *Two Nations Under God*, Volume 2. *The Deuteronomistic History of Solomon and the Dual Monarchies*, Volume 2, (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1994), 180. This is also an argument in favour of a single-author scenario, making someone such as Jeremiah a candidate for the identity of Dtr. *Contra* Smend, who argues for multiple redactional layers. Smend, “The Law and the Nations,” 98.

<sup>15</sup> Robert R. Wilson, “Who Was the Deuteronomist? (Who Was Not the Deuteronomist?): Reflections on Pan-Deuteronomism,” in *Those Elusive Deuteronomists*, 82.

<sup>16</sup> He states: “That later writers responsible for additions to the Deuteronomistic History could and did copy its language is attributable to the influence of Deuteronomy and Dtr on the literary tradition behind the Hebrew Bible and does not require the postulation of a multi-generational school, circle or movement of tradents.” Steven L. McKenzie, “Postscript: The Laws of Physics and Pan-Deuteronomism,” in *Those Elusive Deuteronomists*, 264.

<sup>17</sup> Although the redactional phases are. This will be discussed further below in the section on dating.

dtr redaction in the Tetrateuch.”<sup>18</sup> All of these theories are restricted to one particular group in Israelite society, but do not necessarily consider that each of these groups is part of a larger picture. Dutcher-Walls proposes a method of viewing the make-up of the group classified as Dtr in much broader social terms than has been common. The ‘movement’<sup>19</sup> consisted of a broad spread of people from different areas of Israelite life. This theory more appropriately reflects the complexity of everyday human life than those which have been previously broached.<sup>20</sup> Although extremely diverse, a common link in this body of subscribers can be seen in their association with the upper social strata of society. This is evident from their concern with the ideological aspects of cult over and above the day-to-day practical.<sup>21</sup> It is therefore necessary to narrow the field of examination to those parts of the biblical text which are certainly Deuteronomistic – the Decalogue as reiterated in Deut. 5:6-21 for example<sup>22</sup> – in an attempt to establish firstly the concerns and idioms specific to Dtr and not merely to a popular style or genre, and secondly the approximate time period in which they were working. It will then be possible to examine these concerns more fully in order to establish the motive behind Dtr’s focus on them.

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<sup>18</sup> John Van Seters, “Is There Evidence of a Dtr Redaction in the Sinai Pericope (Exodus 19-24, 32-34)?,” in *Those Elusive Deuteronomists*, 170.

<sup>19</sup> For want of a better word and despite Lohfink’s objections. Norbert Lohfink, “Was There a Deuteronomistic Movement?” in *Those Elusive Deuteronomists*, 36-66.

<sup>20</sup> Patricia Dutcher-Walls, “The Social Location of the Deuteronomists: A Sociological Study of Factional Politics in Late Pre-Exilic Judah,” *JSOT* 52 (1991), 77-94. She concludes that “There is not one faction of priests versus prophets, or gentry versus king’s officials. Rather, each faction seems to include the full range of elite social roles – prophets, officials, priests and gentry – in its circle of influence and power. Family connections are often evident and important, for fathers and sons often follow the same world-views. Coalitions are formed to increase influence and power. The divisions thus lie between political ideologies, not between roles, status levels or occupations among the elites.” 91.

<sup>21</sup> Thus, as Janzen notes, Dtr were not interested in the rites involved in sacrifices, but rather are more concerned with the sacrificial location and ideology surrounding it. David Janzen, *The Social Meanings of Sacrifice in the Hebrew Bible: A Study of Four Writings*, (Germany: Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co., 2004), 151-152.

<sup>22</sup> That Dtr were reworking stories from an earlier time and from the North is likely, as is demonstrated by the northern flavour of the Judges narratives. This does not mean that Dtr were themselves originally from the north however, simply that they had reason to rework these stories. The existence of an earlier narrative, rooted in oral tradition, is often presumed. Gary N. Knoppers, *Two Nations Under God*, Volume 2, 122.

Although Römer notes the difficulty in identifying Deuteronomistic ideologies,<sup>23</sup> it is clear that Dtr were preoccupied with the following concerns as expressed in Deuteronomy and Kings:

- The worship of YHWH and no other deity (monolatry/monotheism);
- Cultic centralisation in Jerusalem at the Temple;<sup>24</sup>
- Aniconism;
- Tithing;
- Josiah as the ultimate model of Deuteronomistic piety.

From this it can be concluded that their primary focus is centred on the reign of Josiah and his reforms, dating the initial impetus of Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic History to somewhere in the 600s.<sup>25</sup> The current state of research into the matter of dating can be grouped into three categories: the initial hypothesis of Martin Noth, which proposed an exilic authorship for Deuteronomy and the DH; the Cross school of thought, which posits two primary redactional phases for Dtr; and the Smend school, which includes a further

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<sup>23</sup> Römer, "How Did Jeremiah Become a Convert?," in *Those Elusive Deuteronomists*, 191. He states specifically that "Recent discussion on deuteronomism has shown that there is no consensus regarding the characteristics that make a text deuteronomistic. In order to avoid a sort of pan-deuteronomism, which is not very helpful, we should try to combine the evidence of language, style, compositional techniques and ideology, even if the last criterion is very difficult to handle." It is for this very reason that this thesis will consider only the very clearly Deuteronomistic ideologies and polemics and will leave finer details for future studies.

<sup>24</sup> O'Brien lists centralisation as one of the three markers of Deuteronomistic concerns, along with "fidelity to the exclusive worship of Yahweh... and fidelity to the word of Yahweh's appointed leaders." He notes the expression of these in Deuteronomy 12:8-12 in particular. Mark O'Brien, "The 'Deuteronomistic History' as a Story of Israel's Leaders," *Australian Biblical Review* 37 (1989), 20.

<sup>25</sup> McKenzie, "Postscript," 265; F.M. Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1973), 284. Cross states that "The Deuteronomistic History, insofar as these themes reflect its central concerns, may be described as a propaganda work of the Josianic reformation and imperial program." Dutcher-Walls allows for an earlier edition of the DH than the time of Josiah, but is ambiguous about the exact date of this earlier work. It is implied that she believes it not to pre-date this period by a great deal. "The Deuteronomists were involved in the life and events of this time and kept their own viewpoint and Deuteronomistic tradition alive." Dutcher-Walls, "The Social Location of the Deuteronomists," 78.

redactional layer. This final redactional layer can in turn be further classified into several substrata.<sup>26</sup>

## I.ii. Dating

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As has been noted often of late, identifying the group commonly known as Dtr is a very difficult task.<sup>27</sup> The search for Dtr is further complicated by their own account of their origins, in which they utilised the patriarchal stories and the story of the exodus as a legitimisation for the reforms they wished to instigate during the late monarchy.<sup>28</sup> A beginning point for establishing a motive for the reforms of Dtr has its basis in the date which is assigned to them. The two primary theories regarding the dating of the Deuteronomistic school have been proposed by F.M. Cross and Rudolph Smend.<sup>29</sup> Both build on the initial work of Martin Noth.<sup>30</sup> Noth's theory was based on the notion that the DH was conceived as a unit:

This practice of inserting general retrospective and anticipatory reflections at certain important points in the history has no exact parallels in the Old Testament outside Dtr.

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<sup>26</sup> As is noted by Knoppers and McConville, the primary difference between the work of Cross and Smend is that the former focuses on larger themes within the DH while the latter is concerned with the DH from a textual level. Consequently, the two theories are not incompatible. Gary N. Knoppers and J. Gordon McConville, *Reconsidering Israel and Judah. Recent Studies on the Deuteronomistic History*, (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2000), 95.

<sup>27</sup> As is evident from the titles of such works as *Those Elusive Deuteronomists: The Phenomenon of Pan-Deuteronomism*, edited by Linda S. Schearing and Steven L. McKenzie and Thomas Römer's *The So-Called Deuteronomistic History*.

<sup>28</sup> Sparks, *Ethnicity and Identity*, 233-235; Evans, "Cult Images, Royal Policies and the Origins of Aniconism," 31-47; Rainer Albertz, "Personal Piety," in *Religious Diversity in Ancient Israel and Judah*, edited by Francesca Stavrakopoulou and John Barton, (London: T&T Clark, 2010), 143.

<sup>29</sup> Smend, "The Law and the Nations," 95-110; Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, 274-289. In support of both Cross and Smend's theories, Gary N. Knoppers makes a convincing case for at least two editions of the DH in *Two Nations Under God*, Volume 2, 147-151.

<sup>30</sup> Martin Noth, *The Deuteronomistic History*, (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1981).

Here, then, we have a characteristic which strongly supports the thesis that Dtr. was conceived as a unified and self-contained whole.<sup>31</sup>

Once again, there are conflicting hypotheses regarding the initial cohesion of these texts, and it is still very much in debate as to the extent of the redaction undertaken by Dtr in order to achieve a smooth narrative in such a large portion of the text. Moreover, while the extent of the original Dtr composition is uncertain, it may be only very nominally based on traditional tribal narratives, drawing loosely on the oral histories of the people in order to provide them with a plausible false history with which to promote the Deuteronomistic agenda.<sup>32</sup> Crouch has noted that Dtr were focused on an 'identity project' aimed at the creation of a religio-ethnic identity. She makes it clear that "religion itself (is) an expression of ethnic identity."<sup>33</sup> Crouch argues that centralisation and utilisation of a common origins myth were integral to Dtr's campaign.<sup>34</sup> Sparks has also noted the manipulation of the exodus and conquest narratives by Dtr, utilising them as vehicles for identity formation for Israel.<sup>35</sup> Although he associates the development of such traditions with a desire of refugees from the north to see Israel reclaimed from its new inhabitants, Sparks' overall argument that the tradition was integral to the formation of 'Israel' as a united people is a viable one. Römer observes that for Noth, "'law' for Dtr meant the ordinances about worship of 'other

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<sup>31</sup> Noth, *The Deuteronomistic History*, 6. This is not to say that Noth did not make room for the presence of redactional activity in the DH, merely that he considered the first edition of the DH to have been composed as a unit.

<sup>32</sup> As noted by Philip R. Davies, "The Origin of Biblical Israel," in *Ancient Israel in its Near Eastern Context*, 141-147. However, as will be demonstrated below, the brackets formed by references to the 'God of the Fathers' and the names of the patriarchs around the central law-giving section of Deut. that relate back to the history of the people are most likely a later edition. Römer attributes these references to Dtr<sub>2</sub>. Römer, "Deuteronomy in Search of Origins," 123-124, 130-132. Römer states that "In order to have readers who have begun at Genesis think of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob when they come to the 'fathers' in Deuteronomy, practically all that was needed was to create a 'patriarchal frame' around the book by inserting the names Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob at the beginning (1:8, 6:10) and end (30:20, 34:4)." 130.

<sup>33</sup> C.L. Crouch, *The Making of Israel: Cultural Diversity in the Southern Levant and the Formation of Ethnic Identity in Deuteronomy*, (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 122.

<sup>34</sup> Crouch, *The Making of Israel*, 94-164.

<sup>35</sup> Sparks, *Ethnicity and Identity in Ancient Israel*, 233-235; van der Toorn, *Family Religion in Babylonia, Syria and Israel: Continuity and Change in the Forms of Religious Life*, (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 352-362.

gods' and cultic centralization and that 'he apparently ignores the rest of the law.'" He goes on to add in a footnote that "In this essay he intended to show that the Deuteronomic law had been 'perverted' by the Josianic reform, because it was used exclusively to legitimate the centralization of worship."<sup>36</sup> While Noth's work has provided a superb beginning for Deuteronomistic scholarship, it is clear that it is still very much in evolution and may remain so.

While Noth initially posited an exilic date for the authorship of Deuteronomy and the DH, the Cross school of thought posits two major redactional points for Dtr's work. These are Dtr<sub>1</sub>, who are said to have been active during the pre-exilic period in Judah, most likely during the mid to late monarchy, no earlier than the time of Josiah and most definitely no earlier than the time of Hezekiah; and Dtr<sub>2</sub>, which is a post-exilic redaction influenced by the experience of the exile.<sup>37</sup> This theory has not always found support among scholars.<sup>38</sup>

The Smend school of thought posits three primary redactional layers for Deuteronomy and the DH, of which Römer provides a brief summary as follows:

- DtrH, who were operating during the exile;

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<sup>36</sup> Römer, "The Book of Deuteronomy," 182 and n. 2.

<sup>37</sup> An analysis of such redactional activity is undertaken by Brian B. Schmidt, *Israel's Beneficent Dead. Ancestor Cult and Necromancy in Ancient Israelite Religion and Tradition*, (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1996), 138-143. Schmidt attributes the Israelite understanding of necromancy (among other things) to the experience of the exile. He states that "Their insertion not only enhanced the dtr tradition's authority by identifying itself with the prophet Isaiah and by thrusting necromancy's condemnation well into Judah's past, but it also intensified necromancy's abhorrence by attaching its observance to the apostate king Ahaz – the first Judahite king to also endorse human sacrifice... and to the general Judahite population." He goes on to note that "These considerations suggest that the Canaanite origins tradition for Israelite necromancy is the product of a rhetorical strategy intended to enhance the authority of dtr ideology." 142.

<sup>38</sup> Weinfeld places the final composition of the DH during the exilic period. Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy 1-11*, (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 14. His hypothesis is supported by Lisbeth S. Fried, who cites the destruction of all cultic sites as motivation for Dtr's ideologies. Lisbeth S. Fried, "The High Places (*Bāmôt*) and the Reforms of Hezekiah and Josiah: An Archaeological Investigation," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 122.3 (2002), 461. However, such an argument is cyclical and discounts the iconoclastic nature of the Deuteronomistic campaign.

- DtrP, who was the prophetic redactor of Samuel and Kings, and;
- DtrN, who was working during the post-exilic period, and can be further broken down into DtrN1, DtrN2, and so on.<sup>39</sup>

Cross has argued that Dtr<sub>1</sub> (c. 7<sup>th</sup> century BCE) focuses on a contrast between the two themes of Jeroboam's sin and Josiah's uprightness.<sup>40</sup> Such a view assumes the pre-existence of a non-Dtr Deuteronomistic covenant theology without considering the motivation driving such developments.<sup>41</sup> Smend's assertion of the existence of a DtrH is very understandable. However, the primary ideology of Dtr, especially as reflected in this covenant theology, could only have come into existence just before or around the time of Josiah (*absolutely not* before Hezekiah), as they rely very heavily on political events during that time as a basis for the reforms.<sup>42</sup> Therefore, a dating system which combines the two theories could function feasibly.

Mayes has outlined three stages of development in the story of Josiah. The purely Dtr sections of these are 2 Kings 22:3, 12, 23:1, and 2 Kings 17:16, 21:3, 25:18, due to their foci on other deities, priests and worship practices.<sup>43</sup> He also determines that the only section belonging to the first layer is the consultation with Huldah in 2 Kings 22:12-20 as it predicts a peaceful death for Josiah, contrary to historical eventuality.<sup>44</sup> No mention is made by Mayes of the possible legitimacy of the pre-reform cult, especially as it relates to the

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<sup>39</sup> Römer, "The Book of Deuteronomy," 186-187. He states specifically that "The question of the nature and the extent of different layers in Deuteronomy and the rest of the Deuteronomistic History has not yet been satisfactorily resolved. It is not convincing to designate one deuteronomistic stratum 'nomistic', when the whole deuteronomistic concern is about the law of YHWH. And do we really have linguistic or other criteria that enable us to trace a specific deuteronomistic layer from beginning to end?"

<sup>40</sup> Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, 274-285.

<sup>41</sup> Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, 284.

<sup>42</sup> Knoppers details the extent to which Josiah's reform exceeds in extremity the reforms of his predecessors. Knoppers, *Two Nations Under God*, Volume 2, 202.

<sup>43</sup> A.D.H. Mayes, *New Century Bible Commentary: Deuteronomy*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 97.

<sup>44</sup> Mayes, *Deuteronomy*, 101.

cult's likely polytheistic origins. Nor does Mayes attempt to posit a motive for either Josiah's reforms or for the authorship of Deuteronomy, beyond that which states that it was written for the exilic people in need. What Mayes does imply is that the Deuteronomistic authorship may have had economic motivations. He notes that if the possibility of Levitical authorship or close affiliation with Dtr is to be considered, it would seem at first glance that the strong drive towards centralisation would work against their interests, "depriving themselves of their source of livelihood" in the sanctuaries and high places.<sup>45</sup> He goes on to make the distinction between the Levites who were priests in these high places, and those who were not.<sup>46</sup> It is this latter group who benefit the most from the laws of Deuteronomy and cult centralisation. Mayes states specifically:

That the authors of Deuteronomy were formerly Levites unconnected with the cult, now attached to the Jerusalem temple, is, however, a probable conclusion... That these authors were Jerusalem temple priests who had formerly been without connection with the cult explains the strong interest of the book in both non-priestly Levites and Levites who hold or claim priestly status at the central sanctuary.<sup>47</sup>

Weinfeld has further proposed the theory that the initial book of Deuteronomy was most likely written during the reign of Hezekiah, hidden during that of Manasseh and brought forward again during the time of Josiah.<sup>48</sup> While he considers Hezekiah's reign to have been when the book was first composed, he makes it clear that the scribes drew heavily upon older traditions, history and cultic materials.<sup>49</sup> Weinfeld has also noted that according to the

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<sup>45</sup> Mayes, *Deuteronomy*, 106.

<sup>46</sup> Mayes, *Deuteronomy*, 107.

<sup>47</sup> Mayes, *Deuteronomy*, 103-108, in particular 107. That the Levites were responsible for Deuteronomy is supported by von Rad, *Deuteronomy*, 23-27, and Doorly, *Obsession With Justice*, 141-161.

<sup>48</sup> Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy 1-11*, 83, and *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomist School*, (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1983), 161.

<sup>49</sup> Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy 1-11*, 83.

account of its discovery in 2 Kings 22: 8-13, this version of the book was considerably shorter than its current form.<sup>50</sup>

Lohfink has argued against the notion of an ongoing Deuteronomistic movement, instead advocating a Deuteronomistic beginning during the time of Josiah, with centralisation and reforms, but without the ongoing continuance of a 'school' or 'movement', notions which can be problematic at best.<sup>51</sup> Indeed, there is no tangible evidence to demonstrate that there was a long-lived and extensive movement operating in Israel and even continuing in Babylon during the exile and into the following period for an extended period of time, and this sustained momentum comes across as somewhat unrealistic, as one would expect to see an evolution of the purpose of the movement, as political situations shift. In the biblical text there is some shift in Deuteronomistic purpose; however, how much of this can be attributed to a Deuteronomistic movement, or even to Dtr, remains elusive. Lohfink states that

Movements are defined more by their goals than by their literary style. If we want to construct a hypothesis of a 'Deuteronomistic movement', we must support the hypothesis with proofs drawn more from the objectives of the Deuteronomists than from the analysis of their style. Each movement develops its own rhetoric, perhaps even in writing. But when a movement encompasses several groups, the same goals may possibly be presented using different rhetorical styles. Although this is not the time to present a thesis, we could think, by way of example, that at the same time of the weakening of the Assyrian Empire, Deuteronomy, as well as the book of Nahum, a new edition of the book of Isaiah, the Deuteronomistic history and some chapters of Jeremiah addressed to the former Northern Kingdom could all support the following goals without the texts resembling one another from the literary point of view:

1. to obtain national freedom;
2. to regain all the territory of the twelve ancient tribes;
3. to make Zion the unique religious centre for the whole nation.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy 1-11*, 84. Because Shaphan was able to read it through in its entirety at least twice in the one day.

<sup>51</sup> Lohfink, "Was There a Deuteronomistic Movement?," 36-66.

<sup>52</sup> Norbert Lohfink, "Was There a Deuteronomistic Movement?," 46.

Lohfink has summed up this argument by stating that “In any case, without a historical investigation, and depending only on style and the general orientation of a text, we cannot conclude that a ‘movement’ existed. The existence of a text merely means that someone wrote on a papyrus scroll.”<sup>53</sup> Such reasoning does present a problem of classification. If Dtr are not considered to have been a movement, school or group, then what remains does not reflect the coherent overarching ideologies which permeate Deuteronomy and the DH. As a sustained focus, even an evolving one, the term ‘movement’ presents the best classification option that suits what is currently known about Dtr. Lohfink has also raised the possibility that the initial reforms under Hezekiah were a safety measure. The centralisation of worship in the Jerusalem Temple meant that in the event of invasion, it would be simpler for the populace to abandon the surrounding countryside to hide in the capital city, if they did not have to concern themselves with the protection of other shrines and holy places.<sup>54</sup> However, Dtr cannot be reliably dated to a period as early as Hezekiah and, given that their treatment of his reforms are not in the same vein as that of Josiah, any similarity in reforming ideology must be considered coincidental.<sup>55</sup>

Lohfink has questioned the specifically Deuteronomistic and enduring nature of the reform movement established under Josiah. Noting the broad spread of foci which the movement appears to have had, he is unconvinced about its survival after the death of its hero.<sup>56</sup> However, the theory of Dutcher-Walls convincingly argues that it is this very

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<sup>53</sup> Lohfink, “Was There a Deuteronomistic Movement?,” 47.

<sup>54</sup> Lohfink, “Was There a Deuteronomistic Movement?,” 56-57. This speculation seems tenuous at best.

<sup>55</sup> Deuteronomistic ideology did not come from nowhere - as with all things their ideology would have had to evolve gradually over time. Consequently, it is possible that their ideology did have its roots in the time of Hezekiah but only came to full conscious articulation during the reign of Josiah.

<sup>56</sup> Lohfink, “Was There a Deuteronomistic Movement?,” 36-66.

diversity of interests which ensures that Dtr were able to continue promoting their ideologies despite the tragic passing of the king.<sup>57</sup> It is unclear whether or not the promotion of the ideology of a particular faction can be classified as a 'movement'. If the situation is considered in terms of factional alliances and ideologies, it is plausible that there could have been a longstanding political alliance that progressed through the generations and persisted throughout the exile and on into the Second-Temple period.

Römer has dismissed the thesis that an 8<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> century date for the composition of the whole book of Deuteronomy is warranted because of similarities between the codes in Deuteronomy and those in Assyrian texts.<sup>58</sup> While it is clear that there are certainly similar contents, it is not possible to find all the necessary elements in the original version of Deuteronomy. "The original Deuteronomy... hardly contains all the elements found in Assyrian (and other) treaties. Thus, there is a considerable lack of clarity on the nature of

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<sup>57</sup> Hezekiah's reforms were embryonic compared to the more fully developed reforms of Josiah. Lohfink states that "According to him (Albertz) the movement 'was able to find broad support in Judean society. It was made up of a broad coalition among some of the Jerusalem officials, the priests of Jerusalem, the middle classes of Judea, some isolated prophets and the Davidic royal house.' In view of the very diverse special interests of the different groups in this coalition, it is easy to understand why the movement, which developed in the years 630-609 BCE, broke up relatively quickly after the catastrophic death of Josiah in 609. On all the points that concern this present essay, I readily agree with this reconstruction." Lohfink, "Was There a Deuteronomistic Movement?," 58-9; Dutcher-Walls, "The Social Location of the Deuteronomists," 77-94.

<sup>58</sup> He states that "If the Josianic and even exilic authors of Deuteronomy made use of Assyrian treaty rhetoric and ideology and integrated the making of a treaty into the Yahwistic culture, we may detect there a subversive intention. Israel's suzerain is not the Assyrian or Babylonian king, but YHWH, the only lord of his people. Using the Assyrian covenant terms, the Deuteronomist beat the 'enemy' with his own weapons!" Römer, "The Book of Deuteronomy," 197. Whether or not such similarities can be considered a viable argument for the dating of Deuteronomy and the DH, it certainly appears to be the case that the political void left by the withdrawal of Assyria from the international scene at the time of Josiah's reign allowed the monarch the political freedom to throw off any semblance of vassalhood. This would have involved the symbolic excising of all Assyrian deities and practices first from Judah, and then later from Israel. This theory is detailed in E.W. Nicholson, *Deuteronomy and Tradition*, 8-13. Dooley has also noted that the Davidic covenant is *not* based on the form of the vassal treaty, but on that of a land grant. A land grant is an unconditional gift for faithful service. After the fall of Judah to the Babylonians this metaphor was altered to reflect that of a vassal treaty instead, in which certain conditions were imposed on the 'gift' which in this case were not met by the Judahites. Dooley, *Obsession with Justice*, 92-97. It is clear that the authors of Deuteronomy and the DH were familiar with both of these forms of legal document. During the exile this extended metaphor became a catch call for the Judahites.

the relationship between Deuteronomy and the Assyrian documents.”<sup>59</sup> However, there are striking similarities between the code of Deuteronomy and lease of land contracts, indicating that the authors of the text were, firstly, intimately familiar with such contracts, secondly, that they viewed Israel and Judah primarily as economic entities, and thirdly, that they used the language of political allegiance to subvert that very ideology.<sup>60</sup>

Therefore, it is not possible to speak of a smooth, ongoing Deuteronomistic movement, as some scholars are wont to do. Rather, it may be better to consider Dtr’s influence on the text as staggered, beginning with Deuteronomy and the DH and spreading out in an exponential ripple effect, accounting for societal changes and adapting to events beyond their control. There is evidently some manner of Deuteronomistic influence on the biblical text as a whole, brought about by the initial stir caused by the ‘finding’ of the book of Deuteronomy, and promulgated amongst the more educated classes. This was taken up by King Josiah in particular,<sup>61</sup> although whether the full extent of his reforms were enacted during his reign or inserted into Dtr’s account at a later date is unclear. Given that the political circumstances were favourable for reform and the heavy implication that Jeremiah and associates of his were caught up in the situation, it can be considered likely that the focal point for the reform, the book of Deuteronomy itself, was created during this time integrating within it notions already present in the minds of the authors. It would have been accompanied by an early edition of the DH, created as support for the ideologies of the

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<sup>59</sup> Römer, “The Book of Deuteronomy,” 196.

<sup>60</sup> That the Temple was a major landowner and therefore also leaser of land is outlined in Marty E. Stevens, *Temples, Tithes and Taxes. The Temple and the Economic Life of Ancient Israel*, (Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 2006), 81-93. Stevens notes that documents from Ancient Mesopotamia detailing temple sales of land are quite rare, whereas lease documents are extremely common, 89. This will be discussed further in chapter 3.

<sup>61</sup> As is noted by Lohfink, “Was There a Deuteronomistic Movement?,” 36-66.

faction and promoting the interests of the same.<sup>62</sup> This certainly does not negate the possibility of *some*, perhaps a reasonably significant amount, of Deuteronomistic redaction, and there are scholars who would like to suggest that an entire redaction occurred in this time.<sup>63</sup> There are also scholars who believe that the reign and reforms of Josiah are later creations only very loosely based on historical events by exilic or post-exilic redactors, who needed some form of historical basis for their reforms.<sup>64</sup> There is biblical evidence to support some sort of redaction or authorship during the reign of Josiah.<sup>65</sup> The social and economic conditions during the time of Josiah thus provided a situation conducive to the changes instigated by Dtr, which may not have been possible during the reigns of previous monarchs, even if the ideology and determination were present in the minds of the early Deuteronomists.

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<sup>62</sup> Although he would prefer to conclude that much of Deuteronomy is exilic, Römer admits that there is Josianic material present in the text. "They are probably right that there should be some Josianic frame around the law code, but this is not the same as supposing a Josianic edition of the Deuteronomistic History. Even if literary activity in Josiah's time is plausible, it does not mean that the whole Deuteronomistic History was edited then." Römer, "The Book of Deuteronomy," 190.

<sup>63</sup> Such as the original theory of Noth, which posited a date no later than the exile for Deuteronomy and the DH. Specifically, he nominates 562 BCE as the rough end point of the history, stating that "We have no reason to put Dtr. much later than this terminus a quo." Noth has also taken into consideration the distinct possibility that there were previous redactions of the DH before this time. Noth, *The Deuteronomistic History*, 12. Römer has good cause to disagree with this position, Römer, "The Book of Deuteronomy", 184-191.

<sup>64</sup> Davies, "The Origin of Biblical Israel," 141-147. Davies states that "The 'all-Israel' entity is part of an invented history that seeks, among other things, to explain the integration of Judah into Israel; the *result*, not the *basis*, for Judah's adoption of the identity of 'Israel'." 145. Mark O'Brien has outlined the different stages of Deuteronomistic redaction, positioning the first in the Josianic period but utilising earlier work available to them, *The Deuteronomistic History Hypothesis*, 273. Mayes argues that the setting of the exile is the most appropriate for authorship of Deuteronomy. *Deuteronomy*, 81-85, and *The Story of Israel Between Settlement and Exile*, 22-39 in which Mayes positions the second redaction of Deuteronomy, namely 4:1-40; 6-11; 26:16-19; 27:9-10; 28; 29-30 and 32:45-47, during the exile and at the same time as Second Isaiah. He states that "It (Deuteronomy) is composed of earlier books of law which have been brought together into a collection governed by the principle of centralization of worship; to this a parenetic introduction addressing Israel on its way into the land has been added." 38.

<sup>65</sup> O'Brien speculates that Dtr are unlikely to have had extensive records detailing Josiah's reign and reforms and thus that they "relied on official information about it or knew it first hand." *The Deuteronomistic History Hypothesis*, 237. That Josiah's reforms were driven by more than simple piety is outlined by Knoppers, *Two Nations Under God*, Volume 2, who states that while considering Josiah's actions as purely economic is reductive, "this does not warrant overlooking the profound economic consequences of Josiah's reforms... To see Josiah as simply a pious paragon for an exilic audience discounts the royalist features of the Deuteronomist's presentation and overlooks the predicament of Jerusalem and Judah in the late seventh century." 194-195.

### I.iii. The Deuteronomists and Economics

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Very little overtly economic material is present in the biblical texts, revealing an apparent lack of concern which is contradicted by the historical situation throughout the region. There is a great deal of scholarship which backs the notion that economics were an integral factor in the development of ancient Israel and its ideology,<sup>66</sup> and the examples of this type of reform from places such as Egypt run contradictory to the biblical account.<sup>67</sup> In Egypt the reforming Kings were celebrated for their economic and military achievements, as well as those in international and local politics, and wider trade. However, the outward lack of concern with economic matters is contradicted by the undertones of fiscal consideration throughout the DH, especially in such passages as Deuteronomy 12.

Deuteronomy 12 is often considered to be the central ideological section of Deuteronomy.<sup>68</sup> It covers the topic of tithes and sacrifices and what (if anything), is to be eaten or given to a specific place (12:11-27). It also covers the topic of centralisation (12:11, 13-14, 26). These themes are intimately linked, and the chapter articulates the core of Dtr ideology, “Look only to the site that the Lord your God will choose...” (12:5). Deut. 12

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<sup>66</sup> As will be examined in chapters 3 and 4 below.

<sup>67</sup> With the most notable exception of the reform of Akhenaten, in which the Pharaoh eschewed all notion of economic or civic responsibility and focused solely on innovative cultic matters. The result of this was the loss of all external territories (including Canaan). The mechanism by which this set of circumstances arose is discussed by Nadav Na’aman, *Canaan in the Second Millennium B.C.E.*, (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2005), 134-144, in particular 137, where the negligence of the Pharaoh towards Egypt’s international holdings is made evident: “A number of kingdoms near the northern border of the Egyptian Empire... took advantage of the situation and tried to expand their territories.” Previous Pharaohs considered it their divine duty to ensure that the economic life of Egypt ran smoothly, providing employment for the idle population during the flood season at the great temples and necropoleis. Akhenaten appears to have been more concerned with art than with domestic or international affairs.

<sup>68</sup> The deep significance of Deuteronomy 12 to the ideology of Dtr is discussed by Levinson, *Deuteronomy and the Hermeneutics of Legal Innovation*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 23-28. “Deuteronomy 12 does not simply represent ‘centralization law,’ as if that were some immediate positive legal requirement intended directly to act upon society. Instead, what is at stake is something broader, both theoretical and practical: not simply the innovation of centralization but also its careful justification and defence in light of previous Israelite literary history.” 28.

stresses the importance of worship and tithing only at the central sanctuary (12:13), and the importance of always allocating appropriate tithes to the Levites (12:12, 19). The social justice theme noted by Doorly is not heavily stressed in this chapter outside of an obligation to share the bounty of the land,<sup>69</sup> contradicting his insistence that this is a primary concern of Dtr,<sup>70</sup> although there is a dominant iconoclastic theme which bookends that chapter (12:2-3 and 29-31).<sup>71</sup> Thus chapter 12 is, in essence, a summary of the ideology of the Deuteronomistic group, and focuses on ideologies directed towards economic concerns.

A general economic program can be deduced from Deut. 12. The people are to engage in agriculture and are not to be selfish with the produce thereof (12:11-14). In particular, they are to give a percentage of their yield to both the centralised point of the deity's choosing and to the Levitical priests. Dtr are keen to emphasise the primacy of the Levites over and against any other sort of priests, which is indicated by the stress on the term "Levitical priests" in the Jericho narrative in Josh 3:3, rather than the generic specification 'priests'.<sup>72</sup> The people are, in particular, not to apportion any of this produce out to non-centralised or non-Levitical people or places (12:13-14). To do so would not be "doing what is good and right in the sight of the Lord your God" (12:28). However, Lang lists both politics and economics as driving forces behind Dtr's reform – economics in

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<sup>69</sup> Doorly, *Obsession with Justice*, in particular his conclusion, "Justice Themes and the Deuteronomists," 152-160.

<sup>70</sup> Given its token mention in such a crucial chapter it is possible that this theme is a smokescreen for Dtr. Social justice was part of their justification for enacting such drastic cultic reform and may have served to provide a cover to mask their underlying intentions.

<sup>71</sup> This theme resulted in the slaughter of priests and the burning of their bones on their altars during the iconoclastic portion of Josiah's reform. That such a text resulted in such a violent reaction is astounding, although not inconceivable. A brief discussion of this is undertaken by Edelman, "Cultic Sites and Complexes Beyond the Jerusalem Temple," in *Religious Diversity in Ancient Israel and Judah*, edited by Francesca Stavrakopoulou and John Barton, (London: T&T Clark, 2010), 87.

<sup>72</sup> Hans-Joachim Kraus, "Gilgal: A Contribution to the History of Worship in Israel," in *Reconsidering Israel and Judah: Recent Studies on the Deuteronomistic History*, edited by Gary N. Knoppers and J. Gordon McConville, (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2000), 166-167; Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomist School*, 49.

centralisation and politics in shifting allegiances with other nations and consequently also with their gods or, rather, a desire not to be associated with the gods of these other nations.<sup>73</sup> Politics and economics thus had a significant impact upon the development of Dtr's ideologies.

Dtr's innovative genius lies in a hermeneutic presentation of pre-Deuteronomic material to support their own agenda.<sup>74</sup> In order to stress their policy of cultic centralisation Dtr have taken the previous laws regarding sacrifice "in every place" (בכל מקום) (as was previously required by a culture which equated the slaughter of an animal with the sacrifice thereof),<sup>75</sup> and have separated the sacrifice from the slaughter. Now, however, Dtr differentiates between a sacrifice made to YHWH *in the place* (במקום) that he will choose<sup>76</sup> and the concession made for the slaughter of animals for sustenance. This alteration is due to the distances now involved in transport of livestock, separating the bulk of the population from the centralised and prescribed place for sacrifice and tithing.<sup>77</sup> Levinson notes that

The literary recycling allows the Deuteronomic authors to retain the ostensible validity of the older sacrificial norm and to minimize their departure from it... The degree of technical scribal sophistication is remarkable. The authors of Deuteronomy have

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<sup>73</sup> On this Lang notes that "Perhaps the new temples attracted a vast number of people so that the old places of worship lost out financially. Economic envy can occur in the world of religions too.... King Jehu had Jezebel (by now Ahab's widow) murdered, and killed the Baal worshippers. Perhaps that indicates his withdrawal from a foreign policy orientated to Sidon and Tyre." Lang, "No God but Yahweh!," 42-43.

<sup>74</sup> As is outlined in Levinson, "The Innovation of Cultic Centralization in Deuteronomy 12," in *Deuteronomy and the Hermeneutics of Legal Innovation*, 23-52.

<sup>75</sup> Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School*, 213-214; Mayes, *Deuteronomy*, 225, 227-228.

<sup>76</sup> Levinson, "The Innovation of Cultic Centralization in Deuteronomy 12," 31. "Although sacrifice 'in every place' is prohibited, noncultic slaughter 'in all your city-gates' is sanctioned. At the focal point stands Deuteronomy's key requirement of cultic centralization. To express it, the authors revamp the terminology of what was prohibited to formulate what they prescribe: 'not in every place... but in the place.'" 31; Sandra L. Richter, "The Place of the Name in Deuteronomy," *VT* 57.3 (2007), 346; Jürg Hutzli, "The Distinctness of the Samuel Narrative Tradition," in *Is Samuel Among the Deuteronomists? Current Views on the Place of Samuel in a Deuteronomistic History*, edited by Cynthia Edenburg and Juha Pakkala, (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2013), 178-181; Jack R. Lundbom *Deuteronomy: A Commentary*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), 423-441.

<sup>77</sup> Levinson, "The Innovation of Cultic Centralization in Deuteronomy 12," 28-34.

atomistically restricted the older law's authority to individual, recycled lexemes shorn from their original semantic context.<sup>78</sup>

In this way Dtr were able to reappropriate the earlier, Aaronid laws and apply them to the new Levitical setting. In doing so, they were able to provide an economic allowance for the Levites (Deut. 12:19) while also easing the geographical burden of tithes and sacrifice now imposed on the population, by including provision for the conversion of tithes into currency, which is a contravention of the earlier law prohibiting this practice.<sup>79</sup> This also considers and accounts for the great distances now imposed between the people and their only remaining place of sacrifice.

Oded Lipschits has determined that the 'repair' stories of Jehoash and Josiah were both written by Dtr<sub>1</sub> (during the time of Josiah), the former becoming the literary basis of the latter as a device for the finding of the book.<sup>80</sup> Neither story actually says anything about Temple repairs – the first concerns the establishment of the fiscal collection system and the second, the finding of the book. Dtr<sub>1</sub> used the presence of the very well known cash box in the Temple to provide a basis for this 'history,' – however no evidence suggests that there were any 'royal inscriptions' to use as a basis, but there is evidence from elsewhere in the ANE regarding the existence of such cash boxes in temples and shrines.<sup>81</sup> Lipschits states that "Dtr<sub>1</sub> used the contemporary practice of his day to project into the past, most likely because tradition connected this chest and its finances with the reign of Jehoash. It also

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<sup>78</sup> Levinson, "The Innovation of Cultic Centralization in Deuteronomy 12," 33.

<sup>79</sup> As is noted in Levinson, "The Innovation of Cultic Centralization in Deuteronomy 12," 40. Deut. 12:21 is repeated in 14:24 where the conversion of sacrificial produce into currency is specified.

<sup>80</sup> Oded Lipschits, "On Cash-Boxes and Finding or Not Finding Books: Jehoash's and Josiah's Decisions to Repair the Temple," in *Ancient Israel in its Near Eastern Context*, edited by Yairah Amit, Ehud Ben Zvi, Israel Finkelstein and Oded Lipschits, (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 241.

<sup>81</sup> Oded Lipschits, "On Cash-Boxes and Finding or Not Finding Books," 239-51. "In some cases, Dtr simply ignored events that were not compatible with his religious and national ideology or with his historiographical purposes." 250.

appears that Dtr knew no additional details.”<sup>82</sup> In the postexilic period, Knoppers argues for a *persistence* of cult for cult’s sake rather than an abandonment thereof due to economic, political or other concerns. For the exilic and/or postexilic redactors of the DH the loss of the Temple led to a revival of pro-Temple rhetoric, rather than the instigation of arguments in favour of abandoning the homeland and ideology of Dtr and their people.<sup>83</sup>

That the Deuteronomists were concerned with economic matters is evident from Deuteronomy 12. The major points, prescriptions and changes in sacrificial laws all led to a promotion of revenue being funnelled into Jerusalem. That *bāmôth* and the iconography that went along with them posed a threat to this is evident, and this is supported by the stress throughout Deuteronomy and the DH on the Levites over and against other priestly groups. From this it is possible to conclude that economic matters were of considerable concern for the authors of Deuteronomy and the DH.

#### I.iv. Prophets

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The idea that the prophets could have brought Deuteronomy into Judah from the north has been proposed by Nicholson,<sup>84</sup> although he seems less amenable to the notion

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<sup>82</sup> Lipschits, “On Cash-Boxes and Finding or Not Finding Books,” 251.

<sup>83</sup> Gary N. Knoppers, “Yhwh’s Rejection of the House Built for His Name: On the Significance of Anti-Temple Rhetoric in the Deuteronomistic History,” in *Ancient Israel in its Near Eastern Context*, 228. “Far from being anticultic in character, the explanation is profoundly cultic. The potential downfall of the temple has nothing to do with economic conditions, international affairs, or military interventions and everything to do with how Israelites related to their patron deity. In modifying the earlier *traditum* (1 Kings 9:3), the *traditio* paradoxically safeguards some aspects of the temple’s identity. Yhwh discards his shrine, but the temple’s overthrow does not become an argument in favour of secularization, other sanctuaries, or a temple-less religion. Far from it, the desolation afflicting the city does not nullify historic Deuteronomistic tenets, such as centralization, the choice of Jerusalem, the observance of Yhwh’s commandments, or the proscription of worshipping other gods.”

<sup>84</sup> Nicholson, *Deuteronomy and Tradition*, 73-82 ; *contra* Mayes, *Deuteronomy*, 106. Mayes observes of Deuteronomy that “the book has no eschatology.” This is a simple but persuasive point.

that it was Levites who carried the tradition down to Judah.<sup>85</sup> With few exceptions, most scholars are agreed that the only prophet directly related to Dtr was Jeremiah.<sup>86</sup> Theories about him go so far as to suggest that he was responsible for the Josianic edition.<sup>87</sup> The most interesting recent theory regarding the correlation between Jeremiah and Dtr has been forwarded by Dutcher-Walls. While not determining conclusively that Jeremiah was responsible for authorship of Deuteronomy and the DH, Dutcher-Walls is nevertheless able to note the ties between Jeremiah and other important players in the story about the finding of the book in 2 Kings. Her argument runs along factional lines rather than simple 'groupings'.<sup>88</sup> She notes the familial relationships flowing through the texts: supporters of Jeremiah are often related to him and also related to the primary players in 2 Kings 23, and members of his opposition are also often related to one another.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> *Contra* Doorly, *Obsession with Justice*, 153-157; van der Toorn, *Family Religion in Babylonia, Syria and Israel*, 357 and n.73. van der Toorn observes that such a distinction is not feasible because many of the prophets were also priests. Dtr have clear affiliations with both Levites and prophets.

<sup>86</sup> O'Brien notes the parallels between Deuteronomy, Kings, and Jeremiah in *The Deuteronomistic History Hypothesis*, 286. That Jeremiah had at least literary links to the authors of Deuteronomy is noted by Hyatt, "Torah in the Book of Jeremiah," *JBL* 60.4 (December, 1941), 381-396, in particular 391.

<sup>87</sup> As expressed by Doorly, *Obsession with Justice*, 148-150.

<sup>88</sup> Dutcher-Walls maintains that Dtr are not a group of only priests, only Levites, only prophets, only northerners, but that the faction which was interested in promoting Deuteronomistic reform was made up of a cross section of all of these. This explains why the interests of all of these groups appear to be represented in Deuteronomy and the DH. It is a theory which is not as 'neat' as many others, but which reflects the natural state of life and social relations the best. Dutcher-Walls, "The Social Location of the Deuteronomists," 77-94.

<sup>89</sup> She notes that "Zephaniah is Jeremiah's second cousin," the son of Maaseiah and grandson of Shallum, who could be the same Shallum who is Huldah's husband. The list of Jeremiah's opponents also carries strong familial ties. Dutcher-Walls, "The Social Location of the Deuteronomists," 88-89. From an archaeological perspective such familial connections can prove invaluable and are often taken into consideration. In a much more scientific way, Grabbe also explores some of these relationships in relation to Jeremiah. At Shiloh for example he notes that a seal has been found that confirms the identity of Azariah, son of Hilkiah. "The names Hilkiah and Azariah were fairly common through this general period, but the combination of names is unique. I would rate the possibility as relatively high." Lester L. Grabbe, "'The Lying Pen of the Scribes?' Jeremiah and History," in *Ancient Israel in its Near Eastern Context*, 191.

The Deuteronomistic style of Jeremiah is often referred to in this context<sup>90</sup> but, setting aside the theory already advanced by Dutcher-Walls, does it necessarily follow that Jeremiah himself was a Deuteronomist or a member of a school of thought or movement that could be considered Deuteronomistic? This question is a difficult one and the answer very much depends on the dating schema to which one subscribes. For example, if an estimation of Deuteronomistic activity is confined to *just before* the time of Josiah and the composition of Deuteronomy and most of the DH,<sup>91</sup> then it is not possible for Jeremiah to have been the author of the scroll found in the Temple. He would have been too young,<sup>92</sup> although it does not rule out the possibility that he was heavily influenced by them, and even subscribed to their style. This also does not preclude his involvement in later redactions of Deuteronomy and the DH. However, if the work of the Deuteronomists was indeed carried out over a period from the time of Josiah to the restoration, or if there was a second redactional phase during the exilic period, then Jeremiah could very well have been involved, perhaps intimately and from close to the beginning. If it can be considered that there were two or more redactional phases of the DH, then it is possible that Jeremiah was

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<sup>90</sup> Kugler describes the examples in support of Deuteronomistic redaction in Jeremiah as “overwhelming”, although he considers this to be due at least in part to revision rather than authorship, thus leaving open the question of Jeremiah’s involvement. Kugler, “The Deuteronomists and the Latter Prophets,” 142-143.

<sup>91</sup> According to the theories which hold that an initial version of Deuteronomy was authored during the reign of Hezekiah or as an immediate result thereof. For example Weinfeld, “Deuteronomy, the Present State of Enquiry,” 249-250. Weinfeld argues for a date *no earlier* than that of the time of Hezekiah. Weinfeld states that “as the demand for an exclusive center of worship is raised within the Pentateuchal literature only in Deuteronomy, there is no escaping the conclusion that this book reflects the reform, in other words, that this book was the outcome of the reform movement flourishing in the times of Hezekiah and Josiah.” *Contra* Lohfink, “It is possible that, at that time, an ancient version of the book of Kings, reaching its high point with Hezekiah, was composed. But it is difficult to consider it as already Deuteronomistic.” Lohfink, “Was There a Deuteronomistic Movement?,” 57. Mayes observes that the historical scenario involving Sennacherib during the reign of Hezekiah could have initiated the pro-Jerusalem centralisation ideology which was then developed in the 7<sup>th</sup> century by Dtr. Mayes, *Deuteronomy*, 60-71, “The activities of the deuteronomistic school in the seventh century BC, resulting in Deuteronomy and later in the deuteronomistic historical work, are not far separated from this time.” 65.

<sup>92</sup> The book of Jeremiah places the beginning of Jeremiah’s prophetic work in the thirteenth year of Josiah’s reign (Jeremiah 1:2-3).

involved with a later phase, possibly during the exile. Based on the evidence laid out by Grabbe,<sup>93</sup> it is possible to conclude that Jeremiah was certainly contemporary with the exile and had some involvement in the development of texts during this time.

That Jeremiah could have been an initial author of Deuteronomy and the DH or was intimately associated with the genesis of Dtr is unlikely if an initial date for Deuteronomy is considered to have been during or prior to the reign of Josiah. That he was heavily influenced by Dtr is certain, and it is possible that he was a member of a redactional school of thought considered to have been exilic Dtr. About Jeremiah Kugler states that

this prophetic book provides overwhelming evidence for some sort of 'deuteronomistic redaction'... Whether such a revision was accomplished by opponents of Jeremiah who wrote from a deuteronomistic perspective to coopt the prophet's words for their own aims, or whether it was undertaken by his own disciples who had been converted to a deuteronomistic way of thinking, is difficult to determine.<sup>94</sup>

However, this hypothesis does not answer the question of involvement with the Deuteronomistic circle by Jeremiah himself. Doorly argues that it is likely that Jeremiah was, if not the sole, then the primary author of the DH.<sup>95</sup> Jeremiah was working with texts originally produced by the Levites at Shiloh and produced the exilic edition of the DH while in Egypt. That Jeremiah was a proponent of the Shiloh tradition and a producer of important scrolls is made evident in the book of Jeremiah itself.<sup>96</sup> Doorly also claims that the fact that

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<sup>93</sup> Lester L. Grabbe, "'The Lying Pen of the Scribes?,' 189-201. Grabbe examines seal impressions from this time for evidence of personal names and titles for evidence of people who are mentioned in Jeremiah. He is able to verify several of them. He also flags the presence of an inaccurate prophecy in Jeremiah 22 and 36 regarding the burial of Jehoiakim. This indicates that it was recorded very early and integrated into the book as it developed, 196-197.

<sup>94</sup> Kugler, "The Deuteronomists and the Latter Prophets," 142-143.

<sup>95</sup> Doorly, *Obsession with Justice*, 148-151.

<sup>96</sup> Doorly, *Obsession with Justice*, 148-149. Doorly states that "During the reign of Josiah, the foremost proponent of the Shiloh/Shechem tradition was Jeremiah. Jeremiah is the only prophet to mention Samuel, making him an equal to Moses (Jeremiah 15:1). There is no doubt that Jeremiah was at the centre of the Deuteronomic circle and its scribal output." 148. This reckoning links the Levitical priesthood with the Deuteronomists (or Deuteronomistic tradition) via Jeremiah rather neatly.

Jeremiah is never mentioned in the DH is a telling point, stating that he must have intended to distance himself from the narrative.<sup>97</sup> Had the author been someone other than Jeremiah, it is more likely that Jeremiah himself he would have appeared as a character in the narrative.

The concept of an exilic or post-exilic Dtr redaction of Jeremiah is not new by any means, having been noted as early as 1901 by Duhm.<sup>98</sup> It has also been claimed that there is no specific Dtr redaction in Jeremiah and that what at first glance appears to be redactional activity is merely the common literary style and themes of the time.<sup>99</sup> Römer concludes that there is evidence of such a redaction, noting the Deuteronomistic themes paralleled in chapters across the book (for example Jer. 7:5, 25:5 and 35:15).<sup>100</sup> He notes that “Structuring the book by discourses that relate to each other is exactly the same compositional technique observed by Noth for the DH.”<sup>101</sup>

There is also the matter of the other latter prophets. Kugler argues that there is very little evidence other than the circumstantial on which to base the notion of a Dtr redaction of the prophets, with the exception of Jeremiah and possibly Amos.<sup>102</sup> He specifies four categories into which Deuteronomistic influence on a text can be based, ranging from category 4 passages which are those that scholars have often considered to be Deuteronomistic but without any real basis, through to category 1 passages which contain

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<sup>97</sup> Doorly, *Obsession with Justice*, 148-50.

<sup>98</sup> As discussed by Römer, *The So-Called Deuteronomistic History*, 20-21.

<sup>99</sup> McKenzie, “Postscript,” in *Those Elusive Deuteronomists*, 264.

<sup>100</sup> Römer, “How Did Jeremiah Become a Convert to Deuteronomistic Ideology?,” in *Those Elusive Deuteronomists*, 192.

<sup>101</sup> Römer, “How Did Jeremiah Become a Convert?,” 193. Although not mentioned specifically by Römer in this particular work, there is a notable connection with the allusion to the covenant with “your fathers” (in Jeremiah 7:7 for example) and Römer’s treatment of this theme as expressed in the DH in “Deuteronomy in Search of Origins,” 112-138.

<sup>102</sup> Kugler, “The Deuteronomists and the Latter Prophets,” 133-144.

very obvious Deuteronomistic elements, themes in Dtr style, and/or revisions.<sup>103</sup> An outline of these categories is as follows:

- Category 1 passages evince specifically Deuteronomistic themes, concerns and style. Kugler identifies some category 1 passages at the beginning and end of Amos;<sup>104</sup>
- Category 2 passages display some signs of Deuteronomistic style and themes, but are not overtly Deuteronomistic;
- Category 3 passages reflect Deuteronomistic concerns but do not share the style and focus of other material which can be more confidently associated with Dtr;
- Category 4 passages are those which have previously been associated with Dtr, but do not reflect their style or concerns and thus cannot be accurately attributed to Dtr.<sup>105</sup>

These categories provide an excellent mechanism by which to assess the Deuteronomistic character of a text.

Kugler systematically dismisses the Dtr redaction of the other prophets aside from Jeremiah.<sup>106</sup> There is a difference between passages that were written or redacted by Dtr and those influenced by them, although this is not always immediately evident or simple to discern. He states that:

The theology, ideology and diction of the deuteronomistic tradition clearly influenced the late exilic and postexilic prophets; given the conventional dating of the deuteronomic canon and of the prophets in question this is hardly surprising. Thus

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<sup>103</sup> Kugler, "The Deuteronomists and the Latter Prophets," 129.

<sup>104</sup> Kugler, "The Deuteronomists and the Latter Prophets," 129.

<sup>105</sup> Kugler, "The Deuteronomists and the Latter Prophets," 129.

<sup>106</sup> Kugler, "The Deuteronomists and the Latter Prophets," 127-144.

while we find plenty of complementary category 1, 2 and 3 evidence, there is no sign of Deuteronomistic redaction among these books.<sup>107</sup>

It is thus clear that while many of the books of the prophets were influenced by the ideologies of Dtr, it is only the book of Jeremiah which can be said to have a direct relationship with that school of thought. Given the stylistic similarities between Jeremiah and the DH, the probability that the two are intimately connected is high. However, it is difficult to see what, if any, advantage could have been gained by prophets from the reforms if they were not intimately connected with the reformers.

## I.v. Levites

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The idea that the Deuteronomists were associated with the Levites (or were in fact Levites themselves) is a conclusion drawn from the heavy emphasis on the primacy of the Levites in the cult in Deuteronomy and the DH (Deut. 12:12, 18-19; 18:1-8).<sup>108</sup> It is also apparent in the way that the focus on tithing and giving to the Levites is stressed throughout their work. These foci go hand in hand with the Deuteronomistic concern for cultic centralisation in Jerusalem and the legitimacy of the monotheistic and aniconistic cult of YHWH. All non-Levite priests were illegitimate in their eyes and therefore an abomination. Doorly has argued that the focus of the DH is social justice and therefore in line with Levitical concerns, as opposed to the Aaronid priestly focus on strict obedience to sacrificial and purity laws as stressed in Leviticus.<sup>109</sup> However, while social justice is inherent in the

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<sup>107</sup> Kugler, *The Deuteronomists and the Latter Prophets*, 131.

<sup>108</sup> As has been noted by Gottwald, *The Hebrew Bible. A Socio-Literary Introduction*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 388. "Since the *Levitical Priests* occupy so prominent a place in Deuteronomy, it is logical to assume that, as leaders in the covenant-renewal and law-recitation ceremonies, it was also they who were the bearers of the traditions and the shapers of the final form of Deuteronomy." Original italics.

<sup>109</sup> Doorly, *Obsession with Justice*, 154.

DH, this does not supersede their focus on a centralised aniconistic monotheism. In fact, despite the social themes running through the DH, Dtr engaged in an iconoclastic policy which saw local shrines razed and priests murdered (2 Kings 23:4-20). While it may have been in the best interests of Dtr's ideological campaign, the impact upon the larger Judahite community must also be considered. However, there is little record of such social impact in the biblical texts, with rare exceptions such as the protestations of the people in Jeremiah 44.

In discussing the general authorship of Deuteronomy, Römer has discounted the Levitical priesthood as sole authors of the DH and instead places the Deuteronomists with the exiled elders of the Jerusalem court. He cites a familiarity with the treaties and society of Assyria as evidence of this. However, he admits, there are also Levitical and pro-prophetic sections in Deuteronomy. Therefore, "it is too rigid to identify the authors of Deuteronomy definitively with any one professional class. Following Clements and Albertz, we may rather speak of a 'coalition'- a sort of 'reforming party'- under the guidance of intellectuals from the court of Jerusalem."<sup>110</sup> This is a rather persuasive point, and similar to that forwarded by Dutcher-Walls.<sup>111</sup> It provides a reasonable explanatory solution to the complexities of redaction criticism in this area, but does not fully explain the preferential and pointed treatment of Levites throughout the DH.<sup>112</sup> In particular, the pecuniary focus on Levites in the DH is an indication of one of the underlying agendas of Dtr. Furthermore, it is difficult to explain why Dtr were *not* somehow associated with the Levites when they display so much

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<sup>110</sup> Thomas Römer, "The Book of Deuteronomy," in *The History of Israel's Traditions: The Heritage of Martin Noth*, edited by Steven L. McKenzie and L. Patrick Graham, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 195.

<sup>111</sup> Dutcher-Walls, "The Social Location of the Deuteronomists," 77-94.

<sup>112</sup> For example the passages listed above in Deut. 12 alone - Deut. 12:12, 18-19; 18:1-8.

concern for the economic (and cultic) welfare of that group but are not as concerned with the welfare of other groups in Judahite and Israelite society.<sup>113</sup>

Gottwald has noted the fiscal provisions made for country Levites, once the cult had been centralised and the other shrines eliminated.<sup>114</sup> The implications for the Levites in this instance are negative, and as Gottwald points out, the centralisation created what was, in effect, an oversupply of priests. However, Gottwald is equating 'priests' and 'Levites' with one another in this passage. The text in 2 Kings 23:8-9 specifies the destruction of shrines and the import of priests to Jerusalem where they were not permitted into Temple service but made to live with their kinsmen.<sup>115</sup> This was an issue that was revisited by Dtr on their return from the exile, having to re-establish the centralised cult and determine once and for all who had the ultimate right as priests in the new establishment.<sup>116</sup> "The Deuteronomic reform had cancelled out the exercise of priesthood in Judah apart from Jerusalem, but it failed in its hope of integrating the non-Jerusalemite priests into the newly established sanctuary."<sup>117</sup> Gottwald's speculation is that during the exile of the Judahite priests the Jerusalem sanctuary was most likely run by Samaritans.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Mayes notes this focus and also hints at the economic advantage of such, although he does not go so far as to state the extent of this advantage outright, Mayes, *Deuteronomy*, 106-108. "That the authors of Deuteronomy were formerly Levites unconnected with the cult, now attached to the Jerusalem temple, is, however, a probable conclusion... That these authors were Jerusalem temple priests who had formerly been without connection with the cult explains the strong interest of the book in both non-priestly Levites and Levites who hold or claim priestly status at the central sanctuary." 107.

<sup>114</sup> Gottwald, *The Hebrew Bible*, 388.

<sup>115</sup> Given the evidence to the contrary, it is not possible to agree with Gottwald that "'priests' and 'Levites' are interchangeable terms" in *all* instances in Deuteronomy or the DH, although it is often the case that they are, Gottwald, *The Hebrew Bible*, 388.

<sup>116</sup> As is demonstrated in Deut. 18:1-8.

<sup>117</sup> Gottwald, *The Hebrew Bible*, 461.

<sup>118</sup> Gottwald, *The Hebrew Bible*, 461. This is the logical extension of the argument put forth by Davies that Jerusalem was a simple country town and that the real metropolitan (if that term can be applied here) cultic centres were the northern ones. Davies, "The Origin of Biblical Israel", 141-148. During the exile when all the priestly groups along with those involved in cultic administration were absent from Jerusalem and the Temple razed, the people would have had to journey north in order to make sacrifices and tithe at a sanctuary there.

There is an apparent discrepancy between Deuteronomy 18:1-8 and 2 Kings 23:8-9. However, this can be accounted for by considering that Deut. 18:1-8 may be a post-exilic attempt to fully instate the Levites, whereas 2 Kings 23:8-9 may be a reflection by Dtr on the pre-reform practices that were embedded in the Israelite cultural memory. Nelson and Cogan and Tadmor argue that 2 Kings 23:8-9 'contravenes' Deut. 18:1-8 by effectively downgrading the status of the Levites who were to come to Jerusalem to serve. These are the levitical priests who have not been subject to the slaughter inflicted on their non-levitical brethren.<sup>119</sup> In contrast, Sweeney argues that 2 Kings 23:8-9 is "in keeping" with Deut. 18:1-8, but notes that the status of the Levites would have been naturally downgraded once they moved to the capital and that they therefore refused to come due to the economic disadvantage that this would place them under. "Many priests throughout the land would have concluded that their interests would be better served by remaining where they were."<sup>120</sup>

That Dtr were at least intimately involved with the Levitical priesthood is evident from the stress on Levites throughout the texts. This becomes especially evident in fiscal concerns, with the Levites apportioned a tithe (for example Num. 18:21-26; Deut. 26:12) and also established as tax collectors (Neh. 10:37-38). However, given the other, non-Levitical, concerns that are also evidenced throughout Deuteronomy and the DH, it is

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That these sanctuaries were staffed by Samaritans is a further logical step given the primary demographic of Israel at the time. Considering the content of Deuteronomy and the DH, it is not a vast leap to see how displeased Dtr would have been by this turn of events.

<sup>119</sup> Richard Nelson, *First and Second Kings*, (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1987), 258, and Mordechai Cogan and Hayim Tadmor, *II Kings. A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, (New York: Doubleday, 1988), 287.

<sup>120</sup> Marvin A. Sweeney, *I and II Kings*, (Louisville, KY: Presbyterian Publishing Corporation, 2007), 448. Interestingly, Nelson claims that economic motives are entirely ignored throughout the text of Kings (253), whereas Sweeney argues strongly for the economic implications of the reform (448). This is the manifestation of the difference between the overt and implicit motives of the power behind the reform, when compared to the way in which the reformers wanted the reform to be viewed by the Israelite people.

impossible to conclude that the entirety of the diverse group identified as Dtr were Levites. Davies has proposed that while Levites were involved in such activities, anyone admitted to the priesthood for such purposes was 'adopted' into the tribe of Levi.<sup>121</sup> Such a policy has parallels in Egyptian society, with the induction of all temple functionaries into the priesthood, even if they were not involved in priestly duties.<sup>122</sup> This theory accounts for the diverse interests which are evident throughout Deuteronomy and the DH, while also accounting for the primacy of the Levites and their financial welfare over and above all others. It is clear that Dtr were heavily concerned with both the physical and economic welfare of the Levitical group. Stephen L. Cook has concluded that the influence of the Levites did not permeate the texts until the post-exilic period.<sup>123</sup> He bases such conclusions on the observation that Chronicles and a redaction of Micah have a strong Deuteronomistic influence. However, as has been noted by Mayes<sup>124</sup> and Doorly,<sup>125</sup> the Levitical influence on the DH goes far deeper than the post-exilic redaction, and therefore extends into the original layer of the narrative.

Similar to the theory that the Deuteronomists were Levites, the theory that Dtr were priests is the result of their heavy concern with zealous faithfulness to the cult of YHWH and their rigid stress on the Law. They were not, however, the priestly school as defined by Wellhausen's hypothesis. Doorly is particularly adamant about this, noting the social justice

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<sup>121</sup> Philip R. Davies, *Scribes and Schools: The Canonization of the Hebrew Scriptures*, (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), 133.

<sup>122</sup> Andrew Monson, *From the Ptolemies to the Romans: Political and Economic Change in Egypt*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 211-214.

<sup>123</sup> Stephen L. Cook, "Micah's Deuteronomistic Redaction and the Deuteronomists' Identity," in *Those Elusive Deuteronomists*, 229-231.

<sup>124</sup> Mayes, *Deuteronomy*, 106-107.

<sup>125</sup> Doorly, *Obsession with Justice*, 154.

distinction between the Levitical Deuteronomistic school and the Aaronid Priestly school.<sup>126</sup> He cites the heavy focus in texts such as Leviticus on sacrificial and purity laws. Therefore Dtr are unlikely to have been Aaronid priests, as their focus is away from the non-Jerusalemite shrines and places of worship in which many of these priests were active.<sup>127</sup> The contrast between the priestly school of thought during the exile and the work of Dtr is also too great to ignore. There is a clear distinction between the two – so much so that it is impossible to conclude that they were working toward the same end.<sup>128</sup> This is also made very clear by the anti-priestly polemics inherent in the DH,<sup>129</sup> and the polemics against cultic sites with which these priests were concerned. This leaves the Levitical group as a likely candidate for Dtr, as they stood to gain the most from the reforms.

## I.vi. Northern Influence on the Deuteronomists

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Two notions within the DH give rise to the theory that the origin of Deuteronomistic thought and literature is in the northern kingdom.<sup>130</sup> These are the book of Judges, and

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<sup>126</sup> Doorly, *Obsession With Justice*, 153-155.

<sup>127</sup> Despite the fact that many of these priests and places play an instrumental part in the DH – Eli for example, and one would expect that Samuel was thus raised to be an Aaronid priest as he does not appear to have been a Levite.

<sup>128</sup> The heavy focus on sacrifice and cleanliness, as Doorly notes, is one aspect of this.

<sup>129</sup> The constant emphasis on *Levitical* priests throughout Deuteronomy and the DH is one aspect of this. It is the *Levitical* priests who are judges in civil matters in Deut. 17:9 and who are responsible for writing the law for the King to read in 17:18. They are shown to overtly take over priestly functions that Leviticus reserves for the descendants of Aaron, who according to P are the only legitimate priests. The possible reworking of the tradition of the Golden Calf in Exodus 32 by Dtr demonstrates precisely their opinion of the Aaronid priests.

<sup>130</sup> Gerhard von Rad, *Deuteronomy: A Commentary*, (Philadelphia: SCM Press Ltd., 1966), 26-27, 93-94; Sparks, *Ethnicity and Identity in Ancient Israel*, 233-235; Nicholson, *Deuteronomy and Tradition*, 58-82; Morris Silver,

reflections on the patriarchal stories which are scattered throughout the DH. It is the fate of the north at the hands of Assyria which appears to have given them the impetus to reassess and fight for their teachings.<sup>131</sup> They also stress heavily the possibility of reclaiming the north under their hero Josiah (1 Kings 13:1-3),<sup>132</sup> and have a dire warning for Judah in the fate of the north.<sup>133</sup> It is unlikely however that Dtr were interested in widely promoting the stories of the patriarchs, as their cultic interests are not aligned. Constant references throughout the DH to אבותינו directly signify the people involved in the exodus and not the patriarchs.<sup>134</sup> Glosses have been inserted at the beginning and end of Deuteronomy at a later date in order to tie the DH with the origins stories of Genesis and Exodus. It was not within Dtr's initial interests to do so.<sup>135</sup>

Davies attributes some of the Deuteronomistic polemics to anti-Benjamite sentiment following the return from exile when Jerusalem supplanted Mizpah and again became the capital of Judah.<sup>136</sup> In a footnote Davies points out that

It is possible that the polemics of Deuteronomy in favor of a single (unnamed) [sic] sanctuary reflects a period in which several Yahwistic sanctuaries were thriving, and a drive for centralisation was in process but possibly not resolved.<sup>137</sup>

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*Prophets and Markets: The Political Economy of Ancient Israel*, (Boston: Kluwer-Nijhoff, 1983), 194-199. The argument put forth by Silver, that the places referenced in the conquest narratives are often northern, does not take into consideration the rhetorical nature of the text. In forging a new identity for Israel, Dtr had to utilise an altered version of pre-existent tales in order to captivate the attention of the people they were trying to reach.

<sup>131</sup> Mayes, *Deuteronomy*, 81-85; Nicholson, *Deuteronomy and Tradition*, 98-101.

<sup>132</sup> A warning which is also proclaimed heavily by the prophets.

<sup>133</sup> This is stressed very heavily in texts such as 2 Kings 17:9-12, where Israel has sinned against the Lord and is punished. Judah is then warned, but reject this warning in vv.14-18. The cycle of Judges is also a clear expression of this warning although due to the historical setting the northern kingdom is not mentioned.

<sup>134</sup> Römer, "Deuteronomy in Search of Origins," 112-138

<sup>135</sup> As is made clear by Römer, "Deuteronomy in Search of Origins," 112-138. Römer states specifically that "The Patriarchs have no place in this view of origins. In fact, the scarce references to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Israel) in the books from Joshua to 2 Kings all belong to postdeuteronomistic contexts." 135.

<sup>136</sup> Davies, "The Origin of Biblical Israel," 141-3.

<sup>137</sup> Davies, "The Origin of Biblical Israel," 143, n. 8.

Davies' premise lies in positing a date for the story of Jacob – especially as associated with the sanctuary at Bethel - during the Israelite monarchy, if not as late as the neo-Babylonian period. This also accounts for the stories of Esau, as during this period the Edomites were close neighbours, while they had been located much further away during earlier times.<sup>138</sup> However, any direct patriarchal references in the Josianic edition of the DH are unlikely to be original to that text. Davies is able to reclaim this line of argument by noting that the name 'Israel' is firstly a religious one, not a political one (stemming from the children of Jacob associated with the cultic site at Bethel), and secondly, that during the neo-Babylonian period this term naturally filtered down from the Benjamite areas into Judah, where the Judahite populace accepted it as their own religious identity as well.<sup>139</sup>

However, we do not need to look specifically for a political definition of 'Israel,' because in fact 'Israel' in the Judean literature is used in a primarily *religious* sense when not referring to the kingdom that bore the name. 'Israel,' in fact, becomes a social and religious term during the Persian Period, and not a political one – quite distinct in usage from the name of the defunct kingdom. The 'all-Israel' entity is part of an invented history that seems, among other things, to explain the integration of Judah into Israel; the result, not the basis, for Judah's adoption of the entity of 'Israel'.<sup>140</sup>

A way of reconciling the opposing views of Davies and Römer lies in a combination of the theories regarding prophets and Levites and that of Dutcher-Walls regarding factions.<sup>141</sup> The prophetic school with which Jeremiah was closely associated was centred on Shiloh and the Levitical priesthood.<sup>142</sup> It is not necessary for the core of the tradition to have held any reference to the patriarchs at all, for it to have originated in the north. It is the *carriers* of

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<sup>138</sup> Davies, "The Origin of Biblical Israel," 141-143.

<sup>139</sup> Davies, "The Origin of Biblical Israel," 143-147.

<sup>140</sup> Davies, "The Origin of Biblical Israel," 144-145; Anthony J. Frendo, "Back to Basics: A Holistic Approach to the Problem of the Emergence of Ancient Israel," in *In Search of Pre-Exilic Israel*, edited by John Day, (London: T&T Clark, 2004), 43.

<sup>141</sup> Dutcher-Walls, "The Social Location of the Deuteronomists," 77-94.

<sup>142</sup> The cultic and administrative significance of Shiloh is outlined by Nicholson, *Deuteronomy and Tradition*, 61-67. Nicholson makes some convincing arguments in favour of the origins of Deuteronomy with the northern prophets, but is still unable to conclude with any certainty that the tradition did indeed have a northern origin, 82. It is this frustration which makes theories such as that of Dutcher-Walls so attractive.

that tradition who are important to the argument. Thus, if one can identify the pertinent parties, one can also identify the location, and vice versa. While the geographical locations of the patriarchs are often used to this end, there are other identifiers which are present in the text, albeit less explicit. For example, if it can be concluded with Doorly that Jeremiah and his associates were intimately involved with Dtr,<sup>143</sup> and at the same time conclude with Nicholson that Dtr was the product of traditions held by prophets and Levites from Shiloh, then *ipso facto* there is a connection between members of the Judean elite and northern traditions, linked together by ties of blood and political interest. It, however, does not automatically lead to the conclusion that Deuteronomy and the DH had their literary origins in the north. The primacy of Jerusalem in the DH implies that whether or not Dtr originated in Israel, their allegiance and the origins of their ideology resided in Judah.

For Davies, the creation of Judean historical literature is a response to the crisis of the exile (more specifically, the crisis of returning), and the need to adapt and restructure the northern literature of the Benjamites to fit their own traditions, ideology and situation. This also offers a rather tidy solution to the idea that much of Dtr's material originated in the north which, according to the reckoning of Davies, it did. This would date the very earliest of Deuteronomistic traditions to the period immediately following the exile.<sup>144</sup>

Davies states that

the development of Judean historiography may be a response to the situation in the neo-Babylonian period (a situation that may already have been anticipated when the territory of Benjamin was added to the territory of Judah, whenever that occurred), but also, more precisely, a redaction of traditions already imbedded in Benjamin that

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<sup>143</sup> As is outlined in Doorly, *Obsession with Justice*, 148-150. "It is not outside the realm of possibility... that Jeremiah and Baruch, preserving the traditions and values of the ancient Shechem/Shiloh Levitical priesthood, along with the use of additional primary sources... may have produced both the Josianic version and the exilic version of DH by themselves with only the support of a few friends." 149-150.

<sup>144</sup> Davies, "The Origin of Biblical Israel," 147.

required 'correction' in the light of the recent restoration of Jerusalem as capital and sanctuary of the province.<sup>145</sup>

This has serious implications as it provides for Dtr much of their material, although it fails to explain their origin if they are dated to a period before the exile. Perhaps such a dating is precipitous, although this would leave open the question of how to view Cross' Dtr<sub>1</sub> and Smend's DtrN. The logical conclusion is that there was some form of early edition or redaction of the DH. Considering the points discussed above, too little information is available to be able to conclude with any certainty that Dtr had anything but a southern origin, despite the likelihood that Dtr had significant links with the Levitical priesthood from Shiloh. It is clear that the Levites developed their ideology once installed in Jerusalem

de Vaux insists that the book of Deuteronomy is much older than scholarship has given it credit for:

It is quite certain that the work belongs to an older age, and recent studies seem to have proved that it is a collection of Levitical traditions which originated in the Northern kingdom and which were brought down to Judah after the fall of Samaria; this assertion, however, is not necessarily true of each and every one of its prescriptions, and the law insisting on one sanctuary needs to be examined on its own.<sup>146</sup>

Indeed, one would not expect a prescription of such a kind to originate in a place with *two* major official sites of cultic worship (Dan and Bethel). Is it beyond question that there is not much more of Deuteronomy that was authored in Judah as opposed to imported from Samaria? It is evident that at first glance at least *some* of the text appears to have a considerable northern influence, but in view of the northern propensity towards a traditional cult (and here bull and Asherah worship is referred to specifically, as opposed to the aniconistic centralised monotheism of the Deuteronomistic reforms) it is much more

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<sup>145</sup> Davies, "The Origin of Biblical Israel," 147.

<sup>146</sup> Roland de Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions*, (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1961), 338.

likely that a considerable amount of the text, or even the concepts within the text, would have originated in the south. The proscriptions against the prevailing northern practices seem too great for it to have been otherwise, and the concept of centralisation permeates Deuteronomy and the DH very heavily.

Considering the paucity of firm evidence, and given Römer's arguments regarding the conflict of interest Dtr would have had in promoting the stories of the patriarchs, it is only possible to conclude at this time that Dtr had their origins no further north than Shiloh, and were heavily invested in the political and economic interests of Judah over and above Israel.<sup>147</sup> That this bias may have been influenced by the actions of Jeroboam in shunning the sanctuary at Shiloh is worth consideration, but there is no reason to conclude that Dtr were a group consisting purely of northerners. In summation, given the shifting nature of politics in the ANE and the very Judah-centric tone of Deuteronomy and the DH, it is difficult to discern a point of origin for these texts. That Dtr had, at the least, affiliations with the Levitical priesthood from Shiloh is not proof in itself, for, having moved their operations to Jerusalem, these Levites would have been confronted with a different set of problems and ideologies that may have altered their viewpoints. A closer proximity to the monarchy, and more contact with larger numbers of people, could easily have resulted in a change of view and also therefore of any theology or ideology brought with them from the north. That the textual links with the northern patriarchal narratives were a later edition has already been established. It can now be concluded that the genesis of Dtr's ideology is consequently to be sought in Judah, and the economic and ideological situation prevalent in that area.

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<sup>147</sup> Eynikel concludes that "RI was a Judean and not, as H. Weippert thought, an Israelite." He goes on to state that "For him Jeroboam's sin was constructing alternative sanctuaries in Bethel and Dan." Erik Eynikel, *The Reform of King Josiah and the Composition of the Deuteronomistic History*, (New York: E.J. Brill, 1996), 358. Eynikel breaks Dtr<sub>1</sub> down into two substrata: RI and RII, following the schema of Weippert.

## I.vii. Monotheism and Aniconism

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Dtr's concern for aniconism comes across very strongly in the biblical texts (for example the following verses from Deuteronomy alone: 4:16, 23, 25, 5:8, 7:5, 12:3, 27:15). However this appearance is deceptive, as aniconism was a mechanism whereby centralisation was achieved.<sup>148</sup> The prominence of aniconism over and above centralisation in the texts is an indication of the effort Dtr had to expend in order to achieve their goal. Aniconism, presented in the form of apostasy for the worship of other deities and promotion of iconography, is a standard by which Israel and its kings are constantly assessed (1 Kings 16:26, 21:26; 2 Kings 21:11, 21, 23:5, 23:24). The Deuteronomists were fiercely dedicated to the notion of a centralised aniconistic cult of YHWH. Their goal was to establish not merely a centralised cult, but a monolatrous one, as is evidenced by the iconoclastic nature of Josiah's reforms. They gave primacy to the worship of only one god and were obsessively committed to abolishing the worship of all others. While the ideologies of the Deuteronomistic school may have had their roots in monolatry, as proposed by Lang,<sup>149</sup> such drastic and iconoclastic measures would not have been possible had the notion of monotheism not become fully established in their theology. A pure monolatry would never tolerate such abuses.

Furthermore, while aniconism is a primary focus for Dtr, the development of such an ideology is difficult to determine. While Dtr recognise the polytheistic past of Israel and the

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<sup>148</sup> Thus the argument of Smith, who places centralisation before aniconism, Mark S. Smith, *The Early History of God, Yahweh and the Other Deities in Ancient Israel*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2002), 182-199.

<sup>149</sup> Bernhard Lang, "No God but Yahweh! The Origin and Character of Biblical Monotheism," in Claude Geffre and Jean-Pierre Jossua, *Monotheism*, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1985), 48. This is also forwarded by Smith, *The Early History of God*, 189-191.

necessity of ‘temporary’ shrines before the establishment of the Temple, they make it very clear that such practices are no longer acceptable once the Lord has chosen a place ‘for his name to dwell.’<sup>150</sup> The Deuteronomistic aniconistic stance led to a policy of iconoclasm, leading Josiah to embark on a campaign of systematic elimination of cultic paraphernalia. This condemnation extended to the slaughter of priests who served at many shrines and *bāmôth*, as is reflected in 2 Kings 23:5. Such iconoclasm served to address the major fear of Dtr – competition for the Jerusalem Temple. This is reflected in the prescription of capital punishment for anyone caught engaging in idolatrous practices (as is made especially evident in Lev. 24:14-16, but the legal ramifications of which are outlined in Deut. 17:2-3, 29-32).<sup>151</sup>

While Deuteronomy 12 does not explicitly condemn worship of Yahwistic Iconography *per se*, it does succeed in directing the theme of the text into such an aniconism. Iconoclastic policy is then levelled against altars of non-Yahwistic deities and the only place of Yahwistic sacrifice and worship is designated as Jerusalem, thereby automatically excluding any other sanctuary and by default including them in the iconoclastic measures. The text exhorts the people to “not worship the Lord your God in like manner, but look only to the site that the Lord your God will choose” (12:4). The aniconistic thrust of the Deuteronomistic reform and the mechanisms whereby it was implemented will be discussed in more depth in chapter 5.

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<sup>150</sup> This *šem* theology is outlined by Richter, “The Place of the Name in Deuteronomy,” 342-366; Tryggve N.D. Mettinger, *The Dethronement of Sabaoth. Studies in the Šem and Kabod Theologies*, (Lund: CWK Gleerup, 1982).

<sup>151</sup> As has been noted by Louis Stulman, “Encroachment in Deuteronomy: An Analysis of the Social World of the D Code,” *JBL* 109.4 (Winter, 1990), 615-626.

## I.viii. Centralisation

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Cultic centralisation at the Temple in Jerusalem is the overarching focus for Dtr as is evidenced in the repetition of the formulaic phrase “In the place where the Lord shall name/choose” (Deut. 12:5, 11, 20, 15:20, 16:2, and 17:8 among others). Stress on laws surrounding such things as tithing and aniconism served to draw worship more closely in to the Jerusalem Temple complex and away from any ‘external’ sites of worship. That this is such a significant concern for Dtr reveals that they were intimately associated with cultic practices within Jerusalem itself and not necessarily with any ‘external’ sanctuaries.<sup>152</sup> This ties Dtr to the monarchy and the priesthood, and is also an indication that they would have had access to the texts held by those institutions.<sup>153</sup> The notion of anti-Temple rhetoric in the DH is posed by Knoppers, but he goes on to point out that while this appears to be evident in the texts, the idea that the Temple remains a focal point for prayer in fact only highlights its importance.<sup>154</sup> A later redaction of these texts by a group influenced by Dtr’s theology could have been attempting to promote the importance of those associated with the Temple despite the fact that it no longer existed.<sup>155</sup> It is also at this stage that the patriarchal stories were worked into the DH, giving it a much more coherent temporal

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<sup>152</sup> Levinson, *Deuteronomy and the Hermeneutics of Legal Innovation*, 28-34. ‘External’ is employed in this context to refer to sites of worship and sacrifice outside the Temple complex in Jerusalem.

<sup>153</sup> The wide distribution of books as is available today was not a reality in the ancient world. Manuscripts were copied by hand and obtaining one was an expensive process. Large institutions such as temples would have had their own copy of important documents, as well as some very wealthy families. These manuscripts would have been highly prized possessions for whoever owned them. They certainly were not available to members of the general public, who most likely would have been illiterate in any case. Karel van der Toorn, “The Iconic Book: Analogies Between the Babylonian Cult of Images and the Veneration of the Torah,” in *The Image and the Book. Iconic Cults, Aniconism and the Rise of Book Religion in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, edited by Karel van der Toorn, (Leuven: Peeters, 1997), 247-8.

<sup>154</sup> Knoppers, “Yhwh’s Rejection of the House Built for His Name,” 221-6.

<sup>155</sup> This group would be Cross’ Dtr<sub>2</sub> or Smend’s DtrN and writing during the exilic period in the hopes of return and restoration.

progression.<sup>156</sup> Knoppers points out that in the last petition of Solomon, the Israelites are required to pray *in the direction of* the Temple, not necessarily to or in the Temple itself, thus inserting a proviso into the text from hindsight in light of the exile experience.<sup>157</sup>

Knoppers speculates that 2 Kings never places any blame for the events of the Babylonian conquest of Judah on the Jerusalem priesthood, and this fact may provide a clue to the identity of Dtr.<sup>158</sup> He also notes that the injunctions of Solomon give an answer to the debate about the causes of the exile, and accompanying tragedies: was it cessation of offerings to the Queen of Heaven, as claimed by the women in their counter to Jeremiah?<sup>159</sup> Or something of a similar nature? “But in the second theophany there is no hermeneutical dilemma either for Israelites or for outsiders. In both cases, the conclusion is clear. Should the temple fall, it will not be because of blemished sacrifices, exclusive to Yhwh worship, or a corrupt priesthood.”<sup>160</sup> Knoppers goes on to argue that Dtr supports the mythology of the Temple, and in no way blames it for the disaster of the exile. Throughout the DH it is the sins

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<sup>156</sup> As is outlined by Römer, “Deuteronomy in Search of Origins,” 121-138. Römer states specifically that “The patriarchs have no place in this view of origins. In fact, the scarce references to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Israel) in the books from Joshua to 2 Kings all belong to postdeuteronomistic contexts.... Apparently the postexilic authors knew and respected the difference between the patriarchs and the deuteronomistic fathers. In fact, many biblical texts retain a trace of the fact that these two types of ancestor reflect two different types of origin myth.” 135. Levinson further notes that “Literary history presented a problem for the authors of Deuteronomy. The authors of the legal corpus were concerned to mandate a major transformation of Israelite religion: to institute centralization of the sacrificial cult. That innovation required a transformation of the social and religious status quo, whereby sacrifices were offered throughout the land at the long-established local altars and sanctuaries. The innovation of cultic centralization entailed, moreover, a direct conflict with existing prestigious or authoritative texts that circulated within the scribal schools, even if they were not yet publicly known, and that contemplated precisely the opposite of centralization.” *Deuteronomy and the Hermeneutics of Legal Innovation*, 27-28.

<sup>157</sup> Knoppers, “Yhwh’s Rejection of the House Built for His Name,” 224-6. “The temple is to remain a focal point of popular piety, even for those who find themselves far from this site. The centralization legislation (Deuteronomy 12) is incumbent on Israelites, when they come to reside in the land, but Solomon contends the sanctuary’s relevance to Israelites residing in foreign lands.” 225.

<sup>158</sup> Knoppers, “Yhwh’s Rejection of the House Built for His Name,” 228-9, and n. 26.

<sup>159</sup> Jer. 44:15-19.

<sup>160</sup> Knoppers, “Yhwh’s Rejection of the House Built for His Name,” 228.

of the people themselves in contravening the laws laid out in Deuteronomy that bring destruction down upon them.

Rather than being an example of anti-temple rhetoric, the text may be better understood as an example of pro-temple sentiments, an attempt to defend and redefine the mythology of the temple in the aftermath of its humiliation. According to the question-and-answer schema, there was nothing intrinsically wrong with the house that Solomon built. Nor were Yhwh's provisions for Israel in any way deficient. The very rationale for disaster validates Deuteronomistic theology about the temple and the nature of worship to be observed by the Israelites. To put matters somewhat differently, the sorry fate of the temple becomes an object lesson for Israelites on how not to practice their religion.<sup>161</sup>

Knoppers has discussed the way that the 'sins' of Manasseh even out the fates of the northern and southern kingdoms.<sup>162</sup> However, according to Dtr, it is the very nature of the cult of the northern kingdom which led to its destruction, while it is the *(re)introduction* of these cultic elements to the southern kingdom by Manasseh (primarily, but not exclusively), that led to Judah's downfall and the destruction of the house YHWH built for/in his name. Therefore, "There is nothing licit about the Bethel sanctuary and nothing illicit about the Jerusalem sanctuary. Zion will suffer because of royal and popular disobedience. The fall of the north occurred because of its state cultus; the fall of the South will occur in spite of its state cultus."<sup>163</sup> Knoppers concludes that the identity of Dtr is implicitly tied up with this injunction. He also posits that their work "contributes to a larger debate"<sup>164</sup> concerning the future of the cult if and when the exile ends, and if and when the time will be right to rebuild and re-establish working cultic practices. In short, this is part of a much greater argument concerning the future wellbeing of the people, and this wellbeing, according to

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<sup>161</sup> Knoppers, "Yhwh's Rejection of the House Built for His Name," 228-9.

<sup>162</sup> Knoppers, "Yhwh's Rejection of the House Built for His Name," 229-234.

<sup>163</sup> Knoppers, "Yhwh's Rejection of the House Built for His Name," 233-4.

<sup>164</sup> Knoppers, "Yhwh's Rejection of the House Built for His Name," 235.

the principles of the Deuteronomistic scribes, is directly tied to the proper practices of worship.<sup>165</sup>

## I.ix. Conclusion

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Given the above it must be concluded that Dtr were a movement comprising, as Dutcher-Walls argues, of a cross-section of the upper tiers of Judahite society. This was comprised of influential scribes, prophets, Levites, and priests, focused on cultic reform. These early Deuteronomists first became heavily involved with Judahite politics during the reign of Josiah, as is evidenced by Josiah's focus on the fulfilment of Deuteronomistic laws, cultic centralisation, and purification. That there was a later redaction or edition of the DH is evident from the post-Josianic sections of the text. That Dtr were concerned with forging a new identity for Israel as the 'people of YHWH' is evident from their focus on the ideological over the practical aspects of cult.<sup>166</sup> What Cross terms as Dtr<sub>2</sub>, and who were the later Deuteronomistic movement, were also working during the exilic period, striving to maintain the integrity of this new identity. The laws that Dtr altered or established involving sacrifice, finance and the judiciary ultimately ensured the preservation of the major elements of that identity. Further redactions functioned to ensure the proper succession of the Levitical priesthood and the reestablishment of the ethnos Israel with its capital in Jerusalem and centralised worship in Jerusalem's Temple. Dtr were indeed responsible for the attempt to eliminate Asherah and her iconography, the tauromorph iconography, all other shrines and places of worship, and the reformation of the cult of YHWH centralised now in the Temple

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<sup>165</sup> Knoppers, "Yhwh's Rejection of the House Built for His Name," 234-5.

<sup>166</sup> Crouch terms this focus Dtr's "identity formation project", Crouch, *The Making of Israel*, 105-164.

of Jerusalem, as these presented the greatest threat to their centralisation efforts. A benefit of Dtr's focus on centralisation was the increase in income which accompanied it in the form of tithes. Dtr were involved in the authorship and redaction of many biblical books, including but not limited to Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings, and played a major part in compiling large sections of the Hebrew Testament as it is today. The hand of the Deuteronomists is indeed present in many of the central biblical works including some of the prophets,<sup>167</sup> but it does behove us to proceed with caution in the identification of these elusive literary craftsmen.

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<sup>167</sup> Jeremiah in particular.

## II. The Identity of Israel and the Influence of the Deuteronomists.

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Much scholarly attention has recently been devoted to determining the time and nature of the emergence of Israel.<sup>1</sup> Thus, Halpern has focused on the creation of an ethnic identity for Israel as a reaction to pressures from external political and economic sources, resulting in a xenophobic outlook.<sup>2</sup> More recently, Ephraim Stern has argued that the religion of Israel was finally re-established as an aniconistic monotheism in the post-exilic period after much struggle undertaken by the 'official' cultic hierarchy.<sup>3</sup> However, these reconstructions are focused primarily on the historical rather than the ideological,<sup>4</sup> while the biblical text which inspires such reconstructions is in itself an ideological construct.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, it is not a question of the emergence of Israel as an historical entity with a monarchy as reflected in such ethnographic evidence as the Merneptah stele, as much as it

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<sup>1</sup> For example Baruch Halpern, *The Emergence of Israel in Canaan*, (Chico, California: Scholars Press, 1983); The volume edited by Israel Finkelstein and Nadav Na'aman, *From Nomadism to Monarchy*, (Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi, 1994); Robert Karl Gnuse, *No Other Gods: Emergent Monotheism in Israel*, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997); Avraham Faust, *Israel's Ethnogenesis: Settlement, Interaction, Expansion and Resistance*, (London: Equinox, 2006); the volume edited by Francesca Stavrakopoulou and John Barton, *Religious Diversity in Ancient Israel and Judah*, (London: T&T Clark, 2010); and most recently C.L. Crouch, *The Making of Israel: Cultural Diversity in the Southern Levant and the Formation of Ethnic Identity in Deuteronomy*, (Leiden: Brill, 2014).

<sup>2</sup> Halpern, *The Emergence of Israel in Canaan*.

<sup>3</sup> Despite presenting evidence to the contrary, Stern consistently refers to non-monotheistic cultic practices as 'pagan' and unofficial. He distinguishes this very clearly from what he considers to have been the official monotheistic and aniconistic cult of YHWH. He also proposes no starting point for this 'official' cult, thereby implying that it was rooted in antiquity. Ephraim Stern, "Religion in Palestine in the Assyrian and Persian Periods," in *The Crisis of Israelite Religion. Transformation of Religious Tradition in Exilic and Post-Exilic Times*, edited by Bob Becking and Marjo C.A. Korpel, (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 245-255.

<sup>4</sup> With the exceptions of Stavrakopoulou and Barton, *Religious Diversity in Ancient Israel and Judah*, and Crouch, *The Making of Israel*. A similar line of argument is taken by Carl D. Evans, "Cult Images, Royal Policies and the Origins of Aniconism," in *The Pitcher is Broken. Memorial Essays for Gösta W. Ahlström*, edited by Steven W. Holloway and Lowell K. Handy, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995).

<sup>5</sup> Which is not to say that the Bible has no part in history or that history has no part in the Bible. This is evidently not the case. However, what history there is represented in the Bible is presented through an ideological lens. Any historical reconstruction which does not first consider this ideology rests on rather unsteady foundations.

is about the emergence of the biblical identity 'Israel' as determined by the ideological rhetoric of the Deuteronomists. The political entity Israel may have been in existence hundreds of years before Deuteronomistic ideology first developed. These Israelites, as demonstrated through available archaeological data, had a diverse culture in which a heterogeneous religion existed involving widespread iconography, multiple places of worship, and the worship of more than one deity (often at the same time).<sup>6</sup>

The Deuteronomistic intention was focused on the creation of a particular identity for Israel.<sup>7</sup> This focus utilised rhetorical language to forge 'Israel' as a 'people for YHWH', concentrated on the centralisation of worship on the Jerusalem Temple to the exclusion of all other previously acceptable cultic practices. Such a shift of identity is particularly evident in Josh. 23:1-16, which acknowledges the validity of previous practice compared with the new stipulations concerning it. Crouch has noted that "Israel is distinguished from all other identity groups by virtue of its identification with YHWH. Israel is further distinguished by its exclusive worship of YHWH."<sup>8</sup> There is a distinct message permeating the DH which is focused on shifting the identity of Israel from one state to another. This message pays homage to what used to be acceptable practices, such as the erection of *maṣṣebot* and worship at *bāmôth*, while demonstrating that such practices are no longer acceptable. This

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<sup>6</sup> Patrick D. Miller, *The Religion of Ancient Israel*, (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000), 51-54; Jacques Berlinerblau, *The Vow and the 'Popular Religious Groups' of Ancient Israel*, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 125-132. This is also noted by Stern, who nevertheless concludes that there existed a striking differentiation between these practices and 'official' Yahwism, Stern, "Religion in Palestine in the Assyrian and Persian Periods," 252-253.

<sup>7</sup> Crouch states that "The definition of an unambiguously Israelite cultural identity via the differentiation of Israelites from non-Israelites and the subsequent protection of that identity is... a recurring theme of deuteronomic texts." Crouch, *The Making of Israel*, 140.

<sup>8</sup> Crouch, *The Making of Israel*, 115. This is further demonstrated by Stavrakopoulou, who states that "the 'book religion' of the Hebrew Bible masquerades as an archaic 'official' religion, seemingly intended to transform or eclipse the religions practiced by other groups within the broader cultural community, so that they become 'improper', 'illegitimate' or even 'deviant' religions." Francesca Stavrakopoulou, "'Popular' Religion and 'Official' Religion," in *Religious Diversity in Ancient Israel and Judah*, 49.

comes across most strongly in the stress on the *šem* theology which characterises Dtr's work.<sup>9</sup> The iconoclastic focus of Dtr's reforms make it clear that failure to respond positively to such changes will result in ostracism from the community now ideologically identified as 'Israel', and possibly also death.<sup>10</sup>

While the Hebrew Bible insists that the Israelites and Canaanites were distinct groups (for example Gen. 12:6; Ex. 13:5; Num. 14:45; Deut. 7:1; Josh. 3:10), it is evident from the available extra-biblical data that this was not the case. Both groups inhabited the same areas, ate the same foods<sup>11</sup> and worked the same fields. The peoples of this area were at the mercy of the same superpowers in the shifting political environment of the area in the pre-monarchic period, and subject to the same threat of invasion. Even the biblical text is unclear as to exactly what made these people different, 'Canaanites' as distinct from 'Israelites'. These qualifiers are Deuteronomistic, and much later in origin.<sup>12</sup> The earliest reference to Israel as a people is from the Merneptah Stele. The stele dates to the reign of

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<sup>9</sup> Sandra L. Richter, "The Place of the Name in Deuteronomy," *VT* 57.3 (2007), 342-366; Tryggve N.D. Mettinger, *The Dethronement of Sabaoth. Studies in the Shem and Kabod Theologies*, (Lund: CWK Gleerup, 1982); Elizabeth Keck, "The Glory of Yahweh, Name Theology, and Ezekiel's Understanding of Divine Presence," (PhD diss. Boston College, May 2011), in particular 1-4, 36.

<sup>10</sup> Robert A. Oden Jr, "Taxation in Biblical Israel," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 12.2 (1984), 163-164.

<sup>11</sup> According to Mazar both 'groups' did not consume pig products, which he claims is the biggest cultural difference between them and the Philistines, who farmed and consumed pigs on a much larger scale. Amihai Mazar, "The Israelite Settlement," in *The Quest for the Historical Israel*, edited by Brian B. Schmidt, (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007), 97. In a footnote Halpern also implies, although not explicitly, that Sisera in the Deborah Cycle of Judges 4 and 5 could have been a vassal of Egypt. Halpern states specifically that he might have been a "sea-people vassal". Halpern, *The Emergence of Israel in Canaan*, 217, n.29. The implications arising from this suggestion are astounding. At one stage the entire area was under vassalage to Egypt, and the failure of this system along with Egyptian authority is documented clearly in the Amarna letters. That Sisera was a last vestige of this, attempting to tame the masses into place under Egyptian rule is certainly possible. That the later authors of the biblical texts would then equate these "Canaanite Kings" and "Generals" with a group that was 'other' falls logically into place after this revelation. To this Smith adds that "The Canaanite character of Israelite culture largely shaped the many ways ancient Israelites communicated their religious understanding of Yahweh. This point may be extended: the people of the highlands who came to be known as Israel comprised numerous groups, including Canaanites, whose heritage marked every aspect of Israelite society. In sum, Iron I Israel was largely Canaanite in character." Smith, *The Early History of God*, 28.

<sup>12</sup> The prohibition of the worship of other deities, namely the vague descriptors of the 'Baals and Asherahs', is the foremost of these. The term 'Canaanite' becomes rhetoric in the mouths of the Deuteronomists. As such, it cannot reliably be taken as an historical descriptor.

the pharaoh Merneptah in the late 13<sup>th</sup> century BCE, and refers to Israel among the lands or peoples subdued by the pharaoh. There has been considerable debate regarding the nature of the inscription, and what the reference to 'Israel' actually meant.<sup>13</sup> However, Nestor has argued that "all that can legitimately be inferred about this particular entity is that it existed *somewhere* in Ancient Palestine at the time of Merneptah's campaign to Hurru-Land, or Canaan, in the closing decades of the Late Bronze Age."<sup>14</sup> Nestor's focus is on the socially constructivist nature of the identity Israel which, as is outlined here, is a more viable way of viewing such an identity.<sup>15</sup> Other inscriptions naming Israel are from more recent sources than the Merneptah stele, including the Tel Dan Stele<sup>16</sup> and the Moabite Stone (also known as the Mesha Stele),<sup>17</sup> both of which have been dated to the 9<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Only one source is thought to be a reference to Israel from a time before the Merneptah stele. This is the Berlin pedestal relief dated to c. 1400 BCE, and the interpretation of the reference

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<sup>13</sup> Michael G. Hasel, "Merneptah's Inscription and Reliefs and the Origin of Israel," in *Near East in the Southwest: Essays in Honor of William G. Dever*, edited by Beth Alpert Nakhai, (Boston: American Schools of Oriental Research, 2003), 19-44; Dermot A. Nestor, *Cognitive Perspectives on Israelite Identity*, (New York: T&T Clark, 2010), 178-191; Anthony J. Frendo, "Back to Basics: A Holistic Approach to the Problem of the Emergence of Ancient Israel," in *In Search of Pre-Exilic Israel*, edited by John Day, (London: T&T Clark, 2004), 49-59; Kenton L. Sparks, *Ethnicity and Identity in Ancient Israel. Prolegomena to the Study of Ethnic Sentiments and Expression in the Hebrew Bible*, (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1998), 95-109; J. Maxwell Miller, "Reading the Bible Historically. The Historian's Approach," in *Israel's Past in Present Research. Essays on Ancient Israelite Historiography*, edited by V. Philips Long, (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1999), 366. Miller notes that "we learn very little about Israel from this inscription, and no other such references turn up in the epigraphical sources for the next three and a half centuries".

<sup>14</sup> Nestor, *Cognitive Perspectives*, 179.

<sup>15</sup> Nestor states that "any attempt by biblical scholars to translate this practical category into the substantialist idiom of an internally homogenous, externally bounded group which serves to demarcate the evolution of that singular, regulative and constituting cultural tradition identified textually and archaeologically as 'Israel' simply cannot be sustained." Nestor, *Cognitive Perspectives*, 191.

<sup>16</sup> A comprehensive analysis of the Tel Dan Stele has been undertaken by George Athas, *The Tel Dan Inscription: A Reappraisal and a New Interpretation*, (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2003).

<sup>17</sup> The Moabite Stone is discussed in context with the Merneptah and Tel Dan Steles in Daniel E. Fleming, *The Legacy of Israel in Judah's Bible. History, Politics, and the Reinscribing of Tradition*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 243-246.

inscribed upon it is dubious.<sup>18</sup> These inscriptions are, however, evidence that there was a people known as Israel by this time. The biblical texts define Israel as a people belonging to the deity YHWH, defined by the Deuteronomistic phrase “who brought you out of the land of Egypt” (occurrences of this phrase are too numerous to list here. A selection includes: Lev. 19:36, 22:33, 23:43, 25:38, 26:13; Num. 15:41; Deut. 5:6, 6:12, 8:14, 13:5, 16:1; 1 Sam 10:18; 2 Kings 17:36). This Deuteronomistic classification is an important one, as it indicates an origin for the identity of the ideological entity Israel. An origin for the bureaucratic control and administrative development of the state of Israel and Judah must then also be sought among the Deuteronomists.

The religious practices from Israel before the time of Dtr’s reforms have been revealed to be heterogeneous by current scholarship. Niehr has noted that the counterpoint utilised in the DH to define ‘Israelite’ is ‘Canaanite’. ‘Canaanite’ thus becomes the enemy within.<sup>19</sup> Alberty has also demonstrated that Dtr’s reforms functioned to strengthen the personal relationship between an Israelite and YHWH.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, the inability of archaeology to reveal any distinctly ‘Israelite’ sites has been noted by numerous scholars.<sup>21</sup> For example, this is reflected in the debate regarding the collared-rim jar and the four-room

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<sup>18</sup> As is demonstrated by Peter van der Veen, Christoffer Theis and Manfred Görg, “Israel in Canaan (Long) Before Pharaoh Merenptah? A Fresh Look at Berlin Statue Pedestal Relief 21687,” *Journal of Ancient Egyptian Interconnections* 2.4 (January, 2011), 17-20.

<sup>19</sup> Herbert Niehr, “‘Israelite’ Religion and ‘Canaanite’ Religion,” in *Religious Diversity in Ancient Israel and Judah*, 25-29. Niehr states that “In the Hebrew Bible, the most important difference between Canaan and Judah/Israel is claimed to be a religious one... the construction of an *ethnos* ‘Israel’ as opposed to an *ethnos* ‘Canaan’ was an ideological fiction.” 27.

<sup>20</sup> Alberty, “Personal Piety,” in *Religious Diversity in Ancient Israel and Judah*, 143-144. “But in merging these official cults and traditions with family and personal pieties, the reformers also recast Judah’s relationship with YHWH in the close emotional terms typical of the relationship between an Individual and his or her personal god... Thus, from Josiah’s reign onwards, the differences between personal piety and official religion in ancient Judah were lessened.” 143.

<sup>21</sup> Miller and Hayes state that “the population of Early Iron Age Palestine was heterogeneous... there is nothing about the physical character of either of these types that specifically points to the Israelites.” J. Maxwell Miller and John H. Hayes, *A History of Ancient Israel and Judah*, (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 85; K.L. Noll, *Canaan and Israel in Antiquity: An Introduction*, (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 144-152.

house. While these were previously considered ethnic markers of Israelite settlement, they have recently been attested in non-‘Israelite’ settlements, suggesting that there is more uniformity of material culture throughout the region than was previously thought to have been the case.<sup>22</sup> This has led scholars to reassess their evaluations of what can be considered an ‘ethnic marker’.<sup>23</sup> In their assessment of the finds from Dothan, Master, Monson, Lass and Pierce state that “While these forms have historically been linked to the emergence of the Israelites in the highlands, this association remains far from certain... At Dothan, the Iron I levels contained the new forms of the highlands alongside painted pottery which continues traditions of the earlier Canaanite style. Again, this pottery is likely no more Canaanite than the collared-rim storejar is ‘Israelite’”.<sup>24</sup> Such distinctions in material culture are insufficient for the identification of ethnicity, which is often characterised by metaphysical traits rather than physical ones. Thus, ethnicity is determined by identification of a group with itself, as distinct from the ‘other’.<sup>25</sup>

Killebrew has termed the ethnogenesis of Israelites from Canaanites the “mixed multitude theory”. She states specifically that this theory “interprets the biblical and archaeological evidence as reflecting a heterogeneous, multifaceted, and complex process

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<sup>22</sup> Alan Millard, “Amorites and Israelites: Invisible Invaders – Modern Expectation and Ancient Reality,” in *The Future of Biblical Archaeology. Reassessing Methodologies and Assumptions*, edited by James K. Hoddmeier and Alan Millard, (Grand Rapids: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2004), 154-155.

<sup>23</sup> Finkelstein, “When and How did the Israelites Emerge?,” 77-79. Finkelstein notes that to pigeonhole certain types of pottery into a specific ethnic idiom is to “ignore(s) style, status, and trade factors.” 77.

<sup>24</sup> Daniel M. Master, John M. Monson, Egon H.E. Lass and George A. Pierce, *Dothan I: Remains from the Tell (1953-1964)*, (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2005), 77.

<sup>25</sup> Niels Peter Lemche, *The Israelites in History and Tradition*, (London: SPCK, 1998), 15-20; Megan Bishop Moore and Brad E. Kelle, *Biblical History and Israel’s Past: The Changing Study of the Bible and History*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2011), 129-132; Avraham Faust, “Farmsteads in the Foothills of Western Samaria: A Reexamination,” in *“I Will Speak the Riddle of Ancient Times.” Archaeological and Historical Studies in Honor of Amihai Mazar on the Occasion of His Sixtieth Birthday*, edited by A.M. Maeir and P. de Miroschedji, (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 496-498.

of Israelite identity.”<sup>26</sup> In order to gain control of such a diverse set of practices it was necessary for Dtr to instigate a series of reforms stripping any extraneous practices from the cult.<sup>27</sup> This focus is evident in the acknowledgement that these practices were extant in Israel before the reforms, and the insistence that they are no longer acceptable, as is reflected in the polemics against the establishment of and worship at *bāmôth* after the building of the Temple. In this way they were able to pare the religious practices down to a minimum in order to increase the efficacy of their measures.

While it is impossible to discern the precise nature of the official cult of Israel and Judah, it does appear that the cultic milieu in which the biblical texts developed was heterodox. This is demonstrated by the archaeological data recovered from sites throughout the area. Artefacts such as Judean Pillar-Based Figurines (hereafter JPFs) and scarabs have been consistently uncovered throughout the region.<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, studies on the concept of the role of the queen mother in the official religion of Israel and Judah demonstrate that this heterodoxy extended into the upper tiers of society and into the ‘official’ religion.<sup>29</sup> There is therefore no legitimate reason for a modern viewpoint to delineate between a monotheistic aniconistic cult which was official and somehow *good*, and an unofficial,

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<sup>26</sup> Killebrew, *Biblical Peoples and Ethnicity*, 184. ‘Ethnogenesis’ is a term also employed by Herbert Niehr, “‘Israelite’ Religion and ‘Canaanite’ Religion,” 23-32, and Avraham Faust, *Israel’s Ethnogenesis*, in particular his statement on 19 regarding ethnogenesis as a viable focus for research.

<sup>27</sup> Evans has noted that the differentiation between ‘official’ and ‘pagan’ religion in ancient Israel was most likely a construct of Dtr. He states that “It is more likely that such a distinction was created by the Deuteronomistic scribes and projected onto the literature they produced. They undertook this radical redefinition of Yahwism to justify Hezekiah’s and Josiah’s innovations in the sphere of religion.” Evans, “Cult Images, Royal Policies and the Origins of Aniconism,” 209.

<sup>28</sup> Jennie R. Ebeling, *Women’s Lives in Biblical Times*, (New York: T&T Clark, 2010), 106-108; Albertz, “Personal Piety,” 142.

<sup>29</sup> Susan Ackerman, “The Queen Mother and the Cult in Ancient Israel,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 112.3 (1993), 385-401; Zafira Ben-Barak, “The Status and Right of the *gēbîrâ*,” in *A Feminist Companion to Samuel and Kings*, edited by Athalya Brenner, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 170-185; Nancy R. Bowen, “The Quest for the Historical *Gēbîrâ*,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 63.4 (October, 2001): 597-618. This is also demonstrated through those biblical texts which condemn certain kings for their maintenance of such practices – for example 1 Kings 12:31-32, 15:14, 16:26, 21:26, 22:43; 2 Kings 12:3, 14:4, 15:4, 16:4, 21:11-21.

pagan, heterodox cult which was *bad*. As has been demonstrated by Stavrakopoulou, this view is a misguided and cyclical one which takes the biblical representation of orthodoxy at face value.<sup>30</sup> It is also a result of a tendency towards a certain dualism which has permeated Western scholarship.<sup>31</sup>

Religion is a difficult thing to define. It is a practice, and a worldview. It is something that requires both conviction and, most importantly, praxis. It is something which is *done*.<sup>32</sup> Zevit has observed that religion is “a construct of the scholar’s study, a *terminus technicus* referring to particular human behaviors and the ideas with which they are often, but not always, contingent.”<sup>33</sup> Such difficulties are also noted by Hendrik Adriaanse.<sup>34</sup> However, Renfrew, Zevit and Adriaanse mention common *physical* aspects to religion, and it is these aspects with which chapters 3 and 6 of this thesis are particularly concerned. Religious practice involves set repetitive actions – regular offerings or sacrifice, returning to the same place to pray, the use of vessels or other material goods in the course of these activities.<sup>35</sup> Thus, as Renfrew has noted, a place can be defined as specifically religious if it is set aside

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<sup>30</sup> Stavrakopoulou, “‘Popular’ Religion and ‘Official’ Religion,” 38-44. Stavrakopoulou also notes that one area in which this distinction has permeated thought regarding religion in ancient Israel is with death and burial practices. This is an unreasonable presupposition as, she notes, everybody dies, 45-47. She states explicitly that “all socio-religious groups and their beliefs and practices are thus inextricably interrelated, so that imposing a dichotomous or polarized distinction between ‘official’ religion and ‘popular’ religion risks misrepresenting the essentially *social* context and function of religious practice.” 41, original italics.

<sup>31</sup> Stavrakopoulou states that “Within this context, ‘official’ religion continues to be aligned with those groups perceived to be superior, dominant or elitist, whether socially, politically or theologically.” Stavrakopoulou, “‘Popular’ Religion and ‘Official’ Religion,” 40.

<sup>32</sup> As has been noted by Renfrew, who states that “Ritual behaviour is readily recognised in life through its formality, through the elements of repetition involved and through its evidently purposive character – it has to be seen to be done, whether publicly by a gathering of people, or privately in the presence of the deity.” Colin Renfrew, *The Archaeology of Cult: The Sanctuary at Phylakopi*, (London: The British School of Archaeology at Athens, 1985), 14.

<sup>33</sup> Ziony Zevit, *The Religions of Ancient Israel. A Synthesis of Parallactic Approaches*, (New York: Continuum, 2001), 11.

<sup>34</sup> Hendrik Johan Adriaanse, “On Defining Religion,” in *The Pragmatics of Defining Religion: Contexts, Concepts, and Contests*, edited by Jan G. Platvoet and Arie L. Molendijk, (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 227-235.

<sup>35</sup> This praxis appears in Adriaanse’s definition of religion as: “a form of life in relationship with God or the gods, finding expression in veneration and service, in acts of faith and beliefs.” Adriaanse, “On Defining Religion,” 243; Zevit, *The Religions of Ancient Israel*, in particular 81-83; Renfrew, *The Archaeology of Cult*, 13-21.

for these occurrences.<sup>36</sup> Identifying such places in the archaeological record can only be possible where many of these elements are uncovered in concert – a bowl found in a home could have been used for offerings or could have been used for drinking. A bowl found lying next to a large stone slab accompanied by goddess figurines can more confidently be categorised as cultic (although such conclusions remain somewhat problematic). Such a place could also be defined in this way based upon the presence of such artefacts. In this way also the economic functions of religious institutions become discernible. *Maššeboth* in themselves are not a locus of economic activity. It is not until a *maššebea* is accompanied by an altar, staffed by a priesthood, and utilised by a community on a regular basis that it takes on an economic aspect which is the result of human activity. Any attempt to control religion then must, by definition, be able to influence the actions of people. This is demonstrated by the plethora of evidence concerning the JPFs, and their disappearance late in the monarchy. Byrne has argued that such a disappearance has an economic focus.<sup>37</sup> This is true. However, his rationale for this focuses primarily on the surface motivations for such cultic alterations, rather than the underlying ideological ones. The JPFs are indicative of the widespread nature of iconography in pre-exilic Judah, and thus are representative of the threat which Dtr faced to their centralisation policy. This threat encompassed all forms of iconography, whether Yahwistic or not.

## **II.ii. The Creation of a Rhetorical History and Formation of a New Identity**

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<sup>36</sup> Renfrew, *The Archaeology of Cult*, 16.

<sup>37</sup> Ryan Byrne, "Lie Back and Think of Judah: The Reproductive Politics of Pillar Figurines," *Near Eastern Archaeology* 67.3 (2004), 141-148.

Faust has noted that ethnicity and statehood are interrelated. Statehood has an impact upon the formation of an ethnicity through mechanisms of promotion or resistance, and ethnicity must “exist within the orbit of a state.”<sup>38</sup> He states that “ethnicity equals, in many instances, hierarchy or asymmetrical relations.... Thus it is clear that the attribution of ethnic affiliation on behalf of others (a state or dominant group) is also a major mechanism of self-definition.”<sup>39</sup> Therefore, through their definition of ‘Israel’ as a unique entity distinct from those who were, by Dtr’s definition, not ‘Israelite’, Dtr may have been able to gain a semblance of control of the administrative and religious institutions of Israel and Judah. This was accompanied by a narrative which functioned to underpin the new identity with a working history. Dtr could thus have been able to utilise such rhetorical language to begin subverting the prevailing social order. Much of the DH is devoted to transforming this identity.

Wilson considers the conquest narrative from Joshua 5-11 as a formative myth which served to define the boundaries between the ‘Israelite’ and the ‘other’.<sup>40</sup> He describes the story as an “epic narrative” which sought “to establish continuity within the minds of its readership between the seventh century and one of the ‘golden ages’ of Israelite history.”<sup>41</sup> When defined in this way the conquest narrative is concerned with identity formation over and above the simple reporting of history or recounting of a story. It is rhetoric couched in historical terminology. In this way, the language of the conquest narrative can be construed to have been used in the creation of a new group of people distinct from those who, in the

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<sup>38</sup> Faust, *Israel's Ethnogenesis*, 135-137.

<sup>39</sup> Faust, *Israel's Ethnogenesis*, 136-137.

<sup>40</sup> Ian Douglas Wilson, “Conquest and Form: Narrativity in Joshua 5-11 and Historical Discourse in Ancient Judah,” *Harvard Theological Review* 106.3 (2013), 309-329.

<sup>41</sup> Wilson, “Conquest and Form,” 325.

narrative, are presented as the peoples already living in the land. These people are presented as 'non-Israelites', and as worshippers of idols and other deities.

Stulman has noted that the greatest perceived threats in a society are those which carry the greatest punishment. Therefore, through an examination of crime and punishment in the DH, it is possible to discern the greatest threat perceived by Dtr.<sup>42</sup> Building upon Stulman's analysis, this threat came from apostasy in the form of idolatry and worship at a non-centralised site. Such actions were subject to capital punishment in the same way as murder and rape. This association stresses the importance Dtr placed on 'unorthodox' behaviour, and served to create an atmosphere of caution among the population. Thus, Faust's classifications of resistance and promotion can be seen to work in tandem in the formation of ideological Israel. Faust notes that

The activity of a central government can both 'impose' an identity on a group of people, even if they did not have this identity before, and also promote the emergence of an identity as a form of resistance to its activities; these could very well be the 'same' identity. The two processes can at times be one.<sup>43</sup>

Monolatry was a major element in Israel's new identity. Israel was not monotheistic. Both the Bible and the archaeological data make it clear that Israelite religion involved the worship of many deities,<sup>44</sup> and the Bible does not deny this. This is reflected in the first commandment – a call to monolatry, not monotheism.<sup>45</sup> This monolatrous status forced Israelites into a position where it became necessary to abandon other deities in favour of YHWH. In doing so they became a 'people for/of YHWH'. This identification was aided by the

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<sup>42</sup> Louis Stulman, "Encroachment in Deuteronomy: An Analysis of the Social World of the D Code," *JBL* 109.4 (Winter, 1990), 615-626.

<sup>43</sup> Faust, *Israel's Ethnogenesis*, 137.

<sup>44</sup> Mark S. Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism. Israel's Polytheistic Background and the Ugaritic Texts*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 4-6; Stavrakopoulou, "'Popular' Religion and 'Official' Religion," 38-44.

<sup>45</sup> K.L. Noll, *Canaan and Israel in Antiquity: An Introduction*, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 249-250; Stephen B. Chapman, *The Law and the Prophets*, (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 162 and n. 85; Juha Pakkala, "The Monotheism of the Deuteronomistic History," *SJOT* 21.2 (2007), 159-178.

creation of a shared history in the exodus and conquest narratives.<sup>46</sup> Israel was encouraged to think of itself as an homogeneous group whose ancestors overcame great struggle and who were granted their land and prosperity by YHWH himself. Such an origins myth cemented the bonds between community members and forged for them a new identity as Israel.

Iconography is taboo in light of the new identity forged for Israel by Dtr. As implied by Evans, such condemnation had an underpinning which was other than cultic, and resulted in the development of ideology in order to justify its existence.<sup>47</sup> Stulman notes that the threat to Dtr is not presented by foreigners, but by insiders who act in a 'foreign' way. He terms these insiders "indigenous outsiders".<sup>48</sup> He further notes that these subversive elements were "located in part in the upper tiers of the social hierarchy and enjoy internal contact which can potentially incite large cross-sections of the populations into anomalous/heterodox practices prohibited by the deity."<sup>49</sup>

Thus, Dtr sought to establish a new identity for Israel based on strict guidelines of orthopraxy. In order to achieve this they utilised the exodus and conquest narratives to establish the agency of YHWH as active in Israelite history. At the same time Dtr was able to delineate firm boundaries between 'Israelite' and 'non-Israelite' by retrojecting separate origin narratives into this history. Thus, from an ideological standpoint, it is crucial that the Israelites came from Egypt during the exodus into an area which was already occupied, as it firmly distinguishes between those who worship YHWH exclusively, and those who do not.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Crouch, *The Making of Israel*, 138-140; Niehr, "'Israelite' Religion and 'Canaanite' Religion," 25-27.

<sup>47</sup> Evans, "Cult Images, Royal Policies and the Origins of Aniconism," 209.

<sup>48</sup> Stulman, "Encroachment in Deuteronomy," 627. Stulman states that "the individual and group deviants are insiders who act like outsiders, or indigenous outsiders."

<sup>49</sup> Stulman, "Encroachment in Deuteronomy," 632.

<sup>50</sup> As noted by Wilson, "Conquest and Form," 313-314.

An interesting caveat to this is the observation made by Stulman that cities closer to Israelite areas in the conquest narratives were subject to the ban, or *herem*, while those further afield (and thus less of a threat from an identity standpoint) were not.<sup>51</sup> Thus, the creation of 'Israel' as an ideological identity 'for YHWH' was underpinned by an historical fiction which served to bring the community together, while at the same time distinguishing clear boundaries between 'orthodox' Israelites and potentially subversive elements. These boundaries extended to situations in which these subversive elements were members of Israelite families. The enemy within could be a neighbour, friend, or family member.

### **II.iii. Administration as a support system for reform**

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The process by which Dtr attempted to gain control of Judah's religious institutions (followed by those of Israel) involved paring down the longstanding heterogeneous religious practice. This is reflected in the aniconistic rhetoric of Deuteronomy and the DH, along with the iconoclastic components of Josiah's reform (2 Kings 23:4-20). Grosby notes of centralisation that "Such a center would not only have supplanted competing centers, e.g., Bethel, through the concentration of a unifying authority; but also, as such, it was free to develop as the source from which a consistent, unifying law emanated."<sup>52</sup> This includes the alterations of the systems of sacrifice, tithes, and judiciary in order to compensate for the new changes to cultic structure occasioned by the reforms.<sup>53</sup> The creation of, and insistence

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<sup>51</sup> Stulman, "Encroachment in Deuteronomy," 615 n.10.

<sup>52</sup> Steven Elliott Grosby, *Biblical Ideas of Nationality: Ancient and Modern*, (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2012), 88.

<sup>53</sup> Bernard M. Levinson, *Deuteronomy and the Hermeneutics of Legal Innovation*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 4-6, 23-25; Marvin A. Sweeney, *King Josiah of Judah: The Lost Messiah of Israel*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 129. Sweeney argues that such laws served to place more power in the hands of the

upon, a centralised place of worship served to solidify control over the population. By calling everyone to worship at the central sanctuary the entire population could be more effectively monitored. It provided a means by which 'non-Israelites' could be identified – they were those people who did not heed the call to worship in the central place. Such centrality also served to solidify the bonds between those who did attend, bringing the community into a more close-knit formation.

Aniconistic rhetoric demonstrates the importance of devotion to the one deity YHWH to the exclusion of all others. The iconoclastic actions of the reformers serve to demonstrate the consequences of worshipping other deities, or worshipping YHWH in a way that was no longer acceptable (such as the erection of *maššebot*). Centralisation and the call to worship at the central place provided an opportunity to make public examples of these apostates (Deut. 13:10-11, 17:5-7). The legislation of the death penalty as the punishment for the crime of idolatry brought iconoclasm into the homes and lives of every member of the community, as has been observed by Stulman.<sup>54</sup> It also provided a means by which non-Israelites could be excised from their midst (or, alternatively, converted to 'Israelite' status). Crouch notes the way in which an individual was able to either develop an identity as an Israelite, or renounce that identity, based upon the nature of that individual's behaviour in the cultic sphere.<sup>55</sup> Thus, "An Israelite... can cease to be an Israelite if he or she fails to act like an Israelite."<sup>56</sup> In this way orthopraxy is stressed over and above orthodoxy. Such a change in the legal code necessitated the creation of a system which forced a choice

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king; contra Mayes, *Deuteronomy*, 272-273, and Knoppers, *Two Nations Under God*, Volume 2, 164-5, who argue that Deuteronomy functions to limit the power of the king.

<sup>54</sup> Stulman, "Encroachment in Deuteronomy," 631.

<sup>55</sup> Crouch, *The Making of Israel*, 121-123.

<sup>56</sup> Crouch, *The Making of Israel*, 122.

between compliance and death (or, at best, excommunication).<sup>57</sup> This system would have been self-monitoring – although judges were employed to guard against false accusations,<sup>58</sup> family members were encouraged to report the actions of one another if they were perceived to be idolatrous or to deviate from the new Israelite order in some way (Deut. 13:6-11). This view is taken up by Crouch, who notes that the difficulty involved in this is acknowledged in the text (Deut. 13:9).<sup>59</sup> This difficulty is overcome with an insistence that “mere virtue of birth is not enough to ensure an Israelite of his or her status as such: an Israelite must also act like an Israelite in order to maintain Israelite status and identity... To abandon YHWH is to cease to be Israelite.”<sup>60</sup> This is what is reflected in the provision of capital punishment for idolatry. Stulman states that “The percentage of laws pertaining to idolatry is strikingly higher than that found in C or in other Near Eastern codes.”<sup>61</sup> Of the crimes resulting in capital punishment, thirty-eight percent are related to idolatry.<sup>62</sup>

Any new regime would have needed a solid economic base to ensure its success. For this reason any economic advantage that could be garnered was of great importance to Dtr. The sequestration of lands and other forms of revenue belonging to other places of worship would have provided a solid economic foundation for the Jerusalem Temple complex. That temples commonly owned lands is attested throughout the ANE, the greatest example of

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<sup>57</sup> Oden, “Taxation in Biblical Israel,” 163-164.

<sup>58</sup> It should be noted that these judges were Levites, as specified in Deut. 17:9-10. While there is an element of impartiality in the laws themselves, the close association between the Levites and Dtr indicates that these judges may not have been as impartial as they are presented.

<sup>59</sup> Crouch, *The Making of Israel*, 124-126. This is assuming that this system was implemented and not a later addition designed to provoke reflections upon orthodoxy.

<sup>60</sup> Crouch, *The Making of Israel*, 125.

<sup>61</sup> Stulman, “Encroachment in Deuteronomy,” 622.

<sup>62</sup> Stulman, “Encroachment in Deuteronomy,” 626.

which is the Eanna temple from Uruk.<sup>63</sup> The administrative functions of the Temple played a vital role in the government of Israel and Judah.<sup>64</sup> For example, the information found on the bureaucratic workings of the Eanna Temple of Uruk is extensive, detailing the extent to which the temple functioned as a major institution within the local and also wider community.

Thus it becomes possible to discern the beginnings of an organised larger society. The biblical narrative presents this in a loose tribal confederation. Caution again may see this as a reflection of a later perception of a city- or township-league based around family groups or market communities.<sup>65</sup> In chapter 3 of this study it will be demonstrated that the local shrine or *bāmôth* was essential to the society and economy of each area as an employer, landlord, 'bank', and tax collector. That societies would arise and flourish around these points of religious focus will also be discussed in chapter 3. A state is an organised unit with a clear bureaucracy, the purpose of which is to manage and ultimately control the workings of the society.<sup>66</sup> Such a system naturally places the head 'administrators' in a

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<sup>63</sup> Stevens, *Temples, Tithes and Taxes*, 92-93; Liverani, *The Ancient Near East*, 68-69; Lisbeth S. Fried, *The Priest and the Great King: Temple-Palace Relations in the Persian Empire*, (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2004), 36-39. Fried notes the way in which temple control of land in Uruk was gradually eroded by the monarchy.

<sup>64</sup> For example Stevens, *Temples, Tithes and Taxes*, 85-91; Michael Kozuh, "Ritual Failure in the Business Records of Mesopotamian Temples," in *Ritual Failure: Archaeological Perspectives*, edited by Vasiliki G. Koutrafouris and Jeff Sanders, (Leiden: Sidestone Press, 2013), 53-57; M.A. Dandamaev, "The Neo-Babylonian *tamkārū*," in *Solving Riddles and Untying Knots: Biblical, Epigraphic, and Semitic Studies in Honor of Jonas C. Greenfield*, edited by Ziony Zevit, Seymour Gitin and Michael Sokoloff, (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1995), 523-530; Joseph G. Manning, "Egypt," in *The Oxford Handbook of the State in the Ancient Near East and Mediterranean*, edited by Peter F. Bang and Walter Scheidel, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 87.

<sup>65</sup> Such as the *bet-'ab*, as outlined by Amy Kalmanofsky, *Dangerous Sisters of the Hebrew Bible*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014), 1-3.

<sup>66</sup> This is the common element in all definitions of 'state', (i.e. that a 'state' has some form of organisational or governing body). Different definitions of 'state' are outlined in Walter Scheidel, "Studying the State," in *The Oxford Handbook of the State in the Ancient Near East and Mediterranean*, 5-9; Garfinkle notes that one of the markers of ancient Near Eastern city states is the building of defensive walls around the large townships. He notes that "Already by the ninth millennium BCE, the settlement at Jericho had walls. Such walls attest to the development of an economy no longer based entirely on subsistence labor... Moreover, an authority existed to determine how and where that wall would be built and by whom." Steven J. Garfinkle, "Ancient Near Eastern City-States," in *The Oxford Handbook of the State in the Ancient Near East and Mediterranean*, 97. A more complex definition of state is understood to be in operation in the modern world, as has been identified by

position of considerable power.<sup>67</sup> According to Faust, it is also instrumental in the formation of identity.<sup>68</sup> An example of this is the structure of the Egyptian bureaucracy throughout its history, as it directly parallels the periods of prosperity for the nation. The intermediate periods saw a breakdown of official control, which led to social and political instabilities; while during the old and new kingdoms, which boasted solid bureaucratic footings, the power and wealth of the country rose to legendary heights.<sup>69</sup> This is also an example of the nature of human social inclinations, which lend themselves naturally to such a system once population numbers reach a level where they can support a more complex bureaucracy.<sup>70</sup> This is not, however, an argument for an economy driven purely by market forces.<sup>71</sup>

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S.N. Eisenstadt, "The Civilizational Dimension of Modernity: Modernity as a Distinct Civilization," in *Comparative Civilizations and Multiple Modernities. A Collection of Essays by S.N. Eisenstadt*, Volume Two, edited by S.N. Eisenstadt, (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 493-518.

<sup>67</sup> As has been noted by Max Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, (New York: The Free Press, 1964), 329-363, in particular 339, where he notes the association between technical knowledge and power. In the case of the ancient world such technological knowledge included the literacy and numeracy skills required for bookkeeping and other administrative activities. In their introductory work *Essentials of Sociology*, Beinkerhoff, White, Ortega and Weitz define bureaucracy as "a special type of complex organization characterized by explicit rules and a hierarchical authority structure, all designed to maximize efficiency." David B. Beinkerhoff, Lynn K. White, Suzanne T. Ortega and Rose Weitz, *Essentials of Sociology, Seventh Edition*, (Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth, 2008), 115. They go on to specify that "The purpose of the bureaucratic form is to concentrate power in one or two decision makers whose decisions are then passed down as orders to subordinates." 117. Jaffee has also noted that "The explanation for the rise of bureaucracy as an organizational system cannot be reduced exclusively to its relative efficiency. It must be understood as an effective system of control and exploitation", David Jaffee, *Levels of Socio-economic Development Theory*, (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1998), 61.

<sup>68</sup> Faust, *Israel's Ethnogenesis*, 135-138.

<sup>69</sup> An overview of the stages of Egypt's bureaucratic development can be found in Joseph J. Manning, "Egypt," in *The Oxford Handbook of the State in the Ancient Near East and Mediterranean*, 61-93. Manning states that "Egyptian temples were a key development of economic and ideological power in the state... Ptolemaic activity to incorporate temples into the new state shows how important it was that temples, their priesthoods, and their assets continued to function as a major sector of state." 87.

<sup>70</sup> Jonathan Turner, "A New Approach for Theoretically Integrating Micro and Macro Analysis," in *The SAGE Handbook of Sociology*, edited by Craig Calhoun, Chris Rojek and Bryan Turner, (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2005), 411; Katherine A. Dettwyler, *Cultural Anthropology and Human Experience: The Feast of Life*, (Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, Inc., 2011), 208-209.

<sup>71</sup> Polyani has argued that while economics is essential to human life, economic systems in themselves were not drivers and dictators of social systems. He states that "Though the institution of the market was fairly common since the later Stone Age, its role was no more than incidental to economic life." Karl Polanyi, *Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001), 45.

There is a darker side to a policy of centralisation. While it may not have been the intention of the reformers, these reforms served to widen the gap between rich and poor, increase the value of the 'rent' on the land, and dismantled shrines and discouraged household gods in favour of a centralised shrine which would, in turn, ensure that all excess revenue went to the monarchy and centralised religious establishment and ensured that the economic gap continued to grow.<sup>72</sup> Such a case is also evident from Sumer during an earlier period. King Sargon took possession of the temple estates and created a centralised system.

Diakonoff states that

The victory of Akkade meant centralism, strengthening of the political and economic unity of the country, a centralized and rational irrigation system, seizure of the temple estates by the king, weakening of primitive patriarchal relations and strengthening of the despotic elements, destruction of the oligarchy and creation of a new military and administrative nobility.<sup>73</sup>

The geographical position of Israel, located as it is along the primary land trade route between Egypt and other ANE superpowers such as Assyria, means that its development was very heavily affected by fiscal concerns.<sup>74</sup> Furthermore, Whitelam has determined that economic considerations are central to the military success or failure of any power or nation. He notes that access to resources and technology is the deciding factor in any conflict, and that this played a major role in the development of ancient Israel.<sup>75</sup> It was lack

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<sup>72</sup> As is outlined by Zipporah Glass, "Land, Slave Labor and Law: Engaging Ancient Israel's Economy," *JSOT* 91 (2000), 29-31. Although Glass' argument does not consider external pressures such as the need to raise revenue for tribute or defence, her argument merits consideration. She concludes that "Beyond the king, the primary beneficiaries of Israel's economic growth and prosperity were a class of urban-based landowners, who extracted from former freeholders burdensome rents at each point in Israel's agricultural production." 31.

<sup>73</sup> I.M. Diakonoff, "The Rise of the Despotic State in Ancient Mesopotamia," in *Ancient Mesopotamia*, 192; *contra* Chirichigno, who argues that there is no "clear reference" to tenant farming in the Bible and that it was therefore "not a common practice in Israel." Gregory C. Chirichigno, *Debt-Slavery in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, 126.

<sup>74</sup> As noted by Halpern, who states that "the attraction of Israel's position was social and political, which is to say, primarily economic." *The Emergence of Israel in Canaan*, 100.

<sup>75</sup> Keith W. Whitelam, *The Invention of Ancient Israel: The Silencing of Palestinian History*, (London: Routledge, 1996), 171-173.

of these resources, and an ability to develop a surplus sufficient to alter this circumstance, which contributed to Israel's constant struggle for independence.<sup>76</sup> From the earliest times the Levantine area was occupied primarily by the Egyptians, a state which persisted for the most part until the decline of Egypt's power during the reign of Akhenaten.<sup>77</sup> From the twelfth century BCE the Philistines inhabited the coastal fringe along the southern Mediterranean.<sup>78</sup> Richard Muth has proposed that the reason for the establishment of monarchy and bureaucracy in Judah was due to constant Philistine harassment of the inhabitants of the coastal regions in order to gain their economic surplus,<sup>79</sup> and Faust has noted that interactions with the Philistines played a part in the formation of Israelite identity.<sup>80</sup> The innovations in metalworking and farming at the beginning of the Iron I led that economic surplus to be transferred with the coastal inhabitants to the highland areas, and thus left them open to Philistine invasion due to the steadily increasing agricultural surplus produced as a result.<sup>81</sup> Muth notes two theories involved in this geographical shift by the Canaanites – a collapse in international trade at the end of the Bronze age which caused a move into the highland areas for agricultural purposes, and an invasion by the Philistines driven by the presence of an agricultural surplus in the area at the beginning of

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<sup>76</sup> Whitelam states specifically that "Palestine lacked the demographic and economic base to compete with the major powers of the ancient world." *The Invention of Ancient Israel*, 173.

<sup>77</sup> Richard D. Nelson, *Historical Roots of the Old Testament (1200–63 BCE)*, (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2014), 7-9.

<sup>78</sup> Faust, *Israel's Ethnogenesis*, 140-146.

<sup>79</sup> Richard F. Muth, "Economic Influences on Early Israel," *JSOT* 75 (1997), 83-86. This theory is in line with the analysis of the Amarna letters provided by Halpern, demonstrating that preceding the emergence of terrace-farming in the Levant, constant fighting between the city-states of the plains and mountain regions was rife, leading to constant changes of political alliances and even some shifting of population in search of food and safety. Halpern, *The Emergence of Israel in Canaan*, 56-62.

<sup>80</sup> Faust, *Israel's Ethnogenesis*, 147-156.

<sup>81</sup> In the form of grain and other resources. Muth notes that "Iron tools and implements... were clearly new and technologically superior to bronze", that there is a marked increase of the number of iron tools compared to the number of bronze tools found in the archaeological record dating to the twelfth century BCE, that the Bible makes more reference to iron tools used by the Israelites and their neighbours than bronze ones, and that "Iron tools were cheaper than bronze ones." He also notes that "The spread of Israelite settlement to the north, south and to the western slopes of the highlands can also be explained by technological improvement in agricultural production." Muth, "Economic Influences on Early Israel," 83-86.

the Iron Age, which forced the move into the highland areas.<sup>82</sup> Muth has determined against the first of these theories, on the basis that in most cases the land in the coastal regions is in fact far superior agriculturally to that of the highland areas.<sup>83</sup> He does argue that there is merit, however, in the second theory, as archaeological data indicates an agricultural surplus in Palestine at this time, most likely due to the rise of new technology at the beginning of the Iron I.<sup>84</sup> This same agricultural surplus is noted by Faust.<sup>85</sup> What Muth does not emphasise, however, is that this theory can be corroborated by the biblical record of conflict with the Philistines. The fact that the Bible does not give an economic reason for the Philistine invasion is of no great consequence, it is unreasonable to expect a text written at the earliest, eight hundred years after the event to recall accurately the cause of any conflict. If the conflict itself had instigated such a large amount of social upheaval, as would have been occasioned by the move of no more than twenty thousand people (if Muth's assessment is correct)<sup>86</sup> from the coast into the highlands, it is only natural that it would have had a great part to play in subsequent social legend. Such a theory explains the presence of the conflict in social legend, as conflicts in the region during this time often had an impact on the early Israelite societal group.<sup>87</sup> It could simply be that no other event

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<sup>82</sup> Muth, "Economic Influences on Early Israel," 82-87.

<sup>83</sup> Muth, "Economic Influences on Early Israel," 81.

<sup>84</sup> Muth, "Economic Influences on Early Israel," 80-86. Muth discusses at length the introduction of Iron by the Philistines and cites it as the primary drive towards the agricultural surplus. There are several reasons why a surplus could develop, and he claims that the introduction of new technology (in this case iron ploughshares and other tools which had greater efficacy and longevity than their bronze counterparts) is the most likely in the case of highland Israel.

<sup>85</sup> Avraham Faust, "Household Economies in the Kingdoms of Israel and Judah," in *Household Archaeology in Ancient Israel and Beyond*, edited by Assaf Yasur-Landau, Jennie R. Ebeling and Laura B. Mazow, (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 271-272.

<sup>86</sup> Muth, "Economic Influences on Early Israel," 81.

<sup>87</sup> Both biblical and extra-biblical records attest to a superfluity of such conflicts. As has been previously noted, Israel's geographical position on the trade route between Egypt and other major powers placed them at a disadvantage and they suffered invasion and occupation on a large scale by Egypt, Assyria and Babylon, as well as by a host of smaller 'nations' before the Babylonian exile. After the Babylonian exile they were subject to invasion and occupation by Alexander the Great and then by Rome. It is unsurprising, after such a history, that

caused as large a degree of social upheaval before this time, so as to warrant its preservation in social legend as a major event. That the Philistine/ early Israelite conflict gave rise to tales of famous kings and giant, almost mythological, warriors speaks volumes about the impact that it had on the minds of the early Israelites.<sup>88</sup> This in turn initiated the development of a monarchy in ancient Israel (as is indicated by the rationale provided in 1 Sam. 8:19-20), leading to monarchical control over Judah and Israel, instead of the previous city-state structure that is more commonly associated with pre-Israelite society.<sup>89</sup> Emerging from monarchic control was the rise of a patron-client mode of production, which provided an infrastructure that supported these centralised systems.<sup>90</sup> With the monarchy came the move to stabilise and tighten economic control by means of bureaucratic and religious centralisation – a call to worship in the Temple and a condemnation of the worship of all but the ‘official’ state god YHWH,<sup>91</sup> and a reformation of the notion of what it was to be an Israelite.

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they would develop a cultural identity and theology so closely bound to their homeland. This is noted by Christine Hayes, *Introduction to the Bible*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 187-189.

<sup>88</sup> The tales of king Arthur could be considered as similar in theme, genre and mythological status. His historicity is also still debated. An elaboration on this example is outlined in Donald B. Redford, *Egypt, Canaan and Israel in Ancient Times*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 260-261.

<sup>89</sup> Although as Lemche reminds us, the idea of expansive city-states during this period is based on a modern notion of the great Mediterranean city-states of later periods. The ‘city-states’ in Canaan during the Iron I period were little more than large towns surrounded often by no more than a basic palisade wall, and occasionally a stone one. They were little more than glorified market towns and way stations as the modern observer would consider them.

<sup>90</sup> As is noted in Muth, “Economic Influences on Early Israel,” 88; Glass, “Land, Slave Labor and Law,” 31. Lemche also states that “it is... very clear that the palace state was not a welfare state, and was never understood to be such a thing; it was very much a patronage society on the brink of developing into a feudal system.” Niels Peter Lemche, “From Patronage Society to Patronage Society,” in *The Origins of the Ancient Israelite States*, edited by Volkmar Fritz and Philip R. Davies, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 112-113.

<sup>91</sup> That the patronage systems here discussed lend themselves towards this type of reform is evident. Diakonoff states that “It is quite evident that the reforms were largely intended to reduce the economic and political power of the ruler and to improve the position of the priests (thus, consequently, also of the aristocracy).” His discussion focuses on reform in Lagašh, but comparisons can easily be drawn with what is known of the social structure of ancient Israel. Diakonoff, “The Rise of the Despotic State in Ancient Mesopotamia,” 190.

Further fiscal considerations can be detected in other areas of Israelite life. According to de Vaux, keeping property in the family was a major factor in Israelite property laws. Economic issues are obvious in this case. "If the Law of Levirate binds a man to marry his widowed and childless sister-in-law, the object is no doubt to raise up descendants to the deceased, but it is also to prevent the alienation of the family property."<sup>92</sup> It is clear that much later there is evidence (biblical and extra-biblical) that land was sold out of the family, and bought up by large estate holders, the Temple and state.<sup>93</sup> It is noteworthy that the later biblical texts clearly written, or at least redacted, in exilic or post-exilic times, took shape when people were losing their land to wealthy land holders or conquerors.<sup>94</sup> It is also a possibility that, in no violation of these laws, the wealthy 'head' of a large family group could acquire the land of their lesser family members and then 'rent' it back to them, in a manner akin to systems of *latifundia* or patronage. In support of this system, redactors of the books of the law justified such practices as endemic to Israelite history (Lev. 25:23-34, Num. 27:1-11, 36). Thus they reflect an idealized time that is then portrayed as 'golden' and is thus the greatest of propaganda. There is no extant archaeological evidence to suggest such a method of land-ownership for the Israelites. However, evidence is available to suggest that something approximating a fief system was at work all over the ANE during the LBA and Iron I.<sup>95</sup> This system was not altered rapidly, as to do so would not be in the interests of the ruling classes.

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<sup>92</sup> Roland de Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions*, (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1961), 166.

<sup>93</sup> As discussed in de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, 167.

<sup>94</sup> Stevens cites an example of one family from Nippur accumulating so much land and wealth, which they then rented out (as farm land or in the form of loans of various types), that they eventually destabilised the economic integrity of the entire region, thus expediting the Persian conquest of the area. An example of this is the way in which their activities drove the interest rate in the empire up to fifty percent from ten percent within a century. The account of the Murašu family is outlined in Stevens, *Temples, Tithes and Taxes*, 158-9.

<sup>95</sup> As can be seen by a comparison with other ANE societies around this time. Diakonoff states that "the particular historical conditions of Southern Mesopotamia brought about the creation, at a relatively low level

Glass has proposed a development of the historical administration of Ancient Israel as a progressive centralisation by gradual sequestration of agricultural resources by the elite ruling class, slowly pushing the agricultural and pastoral class further into poverty.<sup>96</sup> This is in accord with the biblical objection to the purchase and accumulation of lands which belonged traditionally to others (Lev. 25), and would lead naturally to the development of laws in retrospect, such as those of Jubilee. "This configuration of large estates under such a rent system enabled an urban elite to dictate market resources, complementing monarchical pursuits for income and sustenance of trade initiatives."<sup>97</sup>

The system of *latifundia* as advocated by Glass operated for the most part in the Mediterranean around Greece and Rome, and in areas of Roman occupation.<sup>98</sup> Some of these estates used primarily slave labour, but Glass is referring rather to cheap labour which is charged a 'rent' on the land in exchange for the 'privilege' of being allowed to farm it. From Glass' reference to the system, there is not a great deal of difference between tenant farmers and slaves. Glass also provides a cost-benefit analysis of the slave versus free-worker conundrum.<sup>99</sup> However, this depends on how the term slave is to be defined. Slavery on a vast enough scale to make widespread *latifundia* of this variety possible would have

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of development of the productive forces, of vast field estates. These, run on the principles of slavery economy, were far from efficient, and needed for their normal functioning an enormous staff of overseers, supervisors, inspectors, scribes, etc. indispensable for forcing their labourers to accomplish their tasks." Diakonoff, "The Rise of the Despotic State in Ancient Mesopotamia," 195. Lemche notes that while the patronage system can develop into a feudal system, it does not quite reach that extent in the case of ancient Israel. He states that "Characteristic of a patronage society is its vertical organisation, according to which at the top we find the *patron*, a member of a leading lineage, and below him his *clients*, ordinary men and their families. The bond between patron and client is a personal one, the client having sworn allegiance to the patron and the patron having sworn to protect his client." Lemche, "From Patronage Society to Patronage Society," 111.

<sup>96</sup> Zipporah Glass, "Land, Slave Labor and Law," 31.

<sup>97</sup> Glass, "Land, Slave Labor and Law," 31.

<sup>98</sup> The principle of *latifundia*, also called the 'Mediterranean mode of production' due to its use in that area, involved a reorganisation of agricultural production which broke production down into a series of 'stages' which could be taxed. Glass, "Land, Slave Labor and Law," 31.

<sup>99</sup> Glass, "Land, Slave Labor and Law," 34-38. The welfare and livelihood of slaves was the responsibility of their owners, whereas tenants were solely accountable for their own productivity or inefficiency. Tenants are, therefore, a more cost-effective option.

left a greater mark on Israelite tradition than is evident from current sources. Debt slavery was a reality in ancient Israel, that is certain, and Glass argues that *latifundia* served to increase the number of debt slaves by driving higher taxes and making debts much more difficult to absolve.<sup>100</sup> Debt slavery on a large enough scale to drive a mode of production for an entire region is a matter of pure speculation and therefore must be discounted for the present.<sup>101</sup> Thus, Glass' insistence that a pure *latifundia* of the sort driven primarily by slavery as a commodity cannot be applied fully in this instance. That it approximates a variant of what Lemche terms a system of patronage can be considered as highly plausible in this scenario.<sup>102</sup>

It is this same continual agricultural surplus that could have given rise to the need for centralisation in the highland areas, whether this be with religious institutions, the monarchy, or both as a linked entity, as is the case in the majority of ancient cultures.<sup>103</sup>

In a market economy, such a surplus would accrue to owners of the land and machinery used in production as rentals or as interests on loans as well as to governments in the form of taxes. In a more primitive society, the output of food and any other agricultural products would accrue to those families, extended families or other groupings such as clans which cooperated in the production of this product, to some other group and/or to some social institution. Some other groups might be

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<sup>100</sup> However, debt slaves are expensive to keep, as defined by Glass in "Land, Slave Labor and Law," 34.

<sup>101</sup> This does not rule out the existence of debt slavery in ancient Israel by any means. That Deuteronomy 15 provides guidelines for the manumission of such slaves is noted by Glass in "Land, Slave Labor and Law," 28-29, and the existence of such provisions in itself highlights the presence of and concern for these slaves in Israel. That they were put to work by the Temple is something argued by Stevens. These workers were 'enslaved' in lieu of interest payments on a loan or as part of the loan terms. Temple slaves were also sometimes apprenticed to free workers in order to increase their skills to be used in service to the Temple. Stevens, *Temples, Tithes and Taxes*, 122.

<sup>102</sup> Lemche, "From Patronage Society to Patronage Society," 106-120.

<sup>103</sup> As is evidenced in the large number of monarchs who claimed to have a special relationship with one or more deities. For example, Averbeck, Studevent-Hickman and Michalowski state that "The Ur III kings, like other kings from ancient Mesopotamia, claimed extremely close relationships to the gods of the pantheon in their titulatures." Averbeck, Studevent-Hickman and Michalowski, "Late Third Millennium BCE Sumerian Texts," in *The Ancient Near East*, edited by Mark W. Chavalas, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 59. The treatment of the pharaoh as a deity in Egypt is discussed by Erik Hornung, *Conceptions of God in Ancient Egypt. The One and the Many*, (New York: Cornell University Press, 1971), 138-142. In particular Hornung notes that "The king's titles and epithets appear to show that he is in the fullest measure a god." 141.

bandits or neighbouring clans or tribes, while the institutions might include armies, temple complexes or governments.<sup>104</sup>

This is reflected in the biblical text with the demand from the people that a monarchy be established in order to provide protection for inhabitants of the area. “Therefore appoint a king for us, to govern us like all other nations” (1 Sam. 8:5).<sup>105</sup> “We must have a king over us, that we may be like all the other nations: Let our king rule over us and go out at our head and fight our battles” (1 Sam. 8: 19-20). This has the converse effect of potentially turning the beneficiaries of that centralised religious institution or monarchy, into the very oppressors that the people hoped to avoid in the first place, enabling them to feed their hunger for power and wealth by utilising the social structure already in existence. This is evident in Glass’ argument regarding the problems associated with the subsequent rents charged on the land during the economic process involved with *latifundia*.<sup>106</sup> The outcome is the dismantling of some aspects of the people’s religious traditions in order to bring further revenue into the centralised systems.

There is an economic advantage to be gained by eliminating so many aspects of cultic practice. In eliminating iconography and the places in which it was primarily employed the reformers were able to draw worshippers away from *bāmôth* and devotions at home

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<sup>104</sup> Muth, “Economic Influences on Early Israel,” 82.

<sup>105</sup> This is followed in the proceeding verses by a list of the disadvantages of monarchy. Whether this is written from the benefit of hindsight during the Babylonian exile, by which time the disadvantages of monarchy had become all too apparent, or not, is a moot point in this instance. It is clear that, at some stage, the Israelite people understood the full social and economic ramifications of their desire to live under a centralised monarchy. Unfortunately by this stage, it was far too late. While it is unclear when this desire for a king originated, what is certain is that Dtr were making a very poignant comment on the problems associated with it. Given the profligacy of small monarchies in the city-states of the ANE, especially as a diplomatic safeguard from superpowers such as Egypt, it is reasonable to assume that the essence of this request was passed down through oral tradition before it was recounted by Dtr. An outline of the discussion about pro- and anti-monarchical sentiment in the DH is undertaken by P. Kyle McCarter, “The Books of Samuel,” in *The History of Israel’s Traditions: The Heritage of Martin Noth*, edited by Steven L. McKenzie and L. Patrick Graham, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 273-280.

<sup>106</sup> Glass, “Land, Slave Labor and Law,” 31.

and instead bring them into the Temple.<sup>107</sup> It is evident that as *asherim* were erected next to altars, this cultic practice is at least not carried out at home, but this does not take into consideration the full functions of these constructions, nor does it consider the widespread Judean Pillar-Based figurines which are very rarely found in cultic sites.<sup>108</sup> Claudia Camp has posited an answer to this conundrum. In a paper given at the SBL conference on the tenth of July 2008 in Auckland,<sup>109</sup> she discussed the apparent connection between the assumption of the Sotah rites by the Priests in Numbers 11, and the decline of the production of cultic objects by the women of Tonga, under the influence of a switch from a matriarchal to a patriarchal system following European contact. This production of religious icons accompanied the religious authority of the women and involved them in the cult in ways that are reminiscent of a form of 'sorcery'. This is very similar to the production of Asherah figurines<sup>110</sup> and other objects that were a part of the cultic practice of early Israel. This accompanied the conduct of fertility rituals, to increase or decrease fertility, as required. As this was taken over by the Temple priests in Jerusalem, they also assumed the economic advantage that came to these women from their 'clients'. It is clear that there is an economic motivation at work in this re-appropriation of production, and possibly also in the re-appropriation of the rituals that went along with this production, as is outlined in

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<sup>107</sup> Contra James W. Watts, author of *Persia and the Torah: The Theory of Imperial Authorization of the Pentateuch*, (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2001). Personal communication, 10<sup>th</sup> July 2008. His argument that the synagogue system is evidence that centralisation was not an issue during this time does not take into consideration the different functions of the Temple and Synagogue. At the Synagogue, the place of teaching, one learns why one has to go to the Temple to tithe and sacrifice, which are functions exclusive to that centralised complex.

<sup>108</sup> As is outlined in Stern, "Religion in Palestine in the Assyrian and Persian Periods," 250-252; Raz Kletter, *The Judean Pillar-Figurines and the Archaeology of Asherah*, (Oxford: Tempvs Reparatum, 1996), 61-67; Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses and Images of God*, 328-335. Keel and Uehlinger state that "The pillar figurines are often found in houses and graves along with small model beds, little lamps, and rattles... These groupings permit various interpretations", 333. The Judean Pillar Figurines will be discussed further in chapter 6.

<sup>109</sup> Claudia Camp, "What has Tonga to do with Jerusalem? Numbers' Jealous Husband and Rebellious Sister in Cross-Cultural Perspective," presented at the 2008 International Congress of the Society of Biblical Literature, held at the university of Auckland, 4pm on Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> July 2008.

<sup>110</sup> Such as the Judean Pillar Figurines.

Numbers 11. Such motives are also detected by Byrne and Claburn, albeit in different ways. Byrne argues more directly that the production of JPFs in Judah represented a threat to the revenue base of Dtr, who would otherwise be in a position to benefit from the manufacture and sale of these items.<sup>111</sup> Claburn argues that it is these existing systems of revenue which must have been reformed in order to cause the least backlash from the population.<sup>112</sup> However, the small-scale profits to be made from the control of production and sale of such icons is not as great as the revenue to be gained by the condemnation of iconography altogether. Any representation which could be physically removed from the central sanctuary could thus serve to re-direct worship away from it.

#### **II.iv. The Deuteronomists and Economic Control**

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The evidence for the re-occupation of the northern kingdom by Josiah reveals a political motivation, and by default also an economic one.<sup>113</sup> As Keel and Uehlinger put it:

Under Josiah, forces seeking the reestablishment of the nation achieved the upper hand in Judah. With the political-military ‘Renaissance,’ there seem to have been intentional efforts to integrate the religious traditions of the Northern Kingdom, including those linked to the exodus and to the covenant traditions, by which Judah clearly stated its claim to be the heir of northern Israel in ideological matters as well. A civil war in Assyria ultimately enabled Josiah, in the eighteenth year of his reign (622), to separate his kingdom from the former super-power. One notes particularly that, in the reform described in 2 Kings 23, the cult of the national god Yahweh was concentrated in Jerusalem and that in the districts claimed by Josiah (and Yahweh) cults that were not dedicated to the worship of Yahweh were eliminated by military action.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> Byrne, “Lie Back and Think of Judah, 141-148.

<sup>112</sup> W. Eugene Claburn, “The Fiscal Basis of Josiah’s Reforms,” *JBL* 92.1 (March, 1973), 15-17.

<sup>113</sup> The political drive to conquer more territory takes several interlinked forms. These are: the acquisition of more space in order to house a growing population; the acquisition of more fertile land to farm (for economic benefit); and the acquisition of other valuable resources – minerals for example.

<sup>114</sup> Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses and Images of God in Ancient Israel*, 286.

This is a clear example of the use of ideological (and iconoclastic) propaganda for an economic benefit. If this account is to be believed, Josiah stepped in to fill the void left by the withdrawal of Assyrian power in the region, working toward a goal of political and economic control. His iconoclastic campaign served to consolidate his power in Jerusalem and did away with the need to install further bureaucratic systems and functionaries to regulate control in outlying areas. Instead, the roles of the Levites were repurposed to fill gaps in the bureaucratic system in the form of Judges and tax collectors, enforcing the ideologies of the new regime.<sup>115</sup> Furthermore, the northern cultic centres of Dan and Bethel were targeted by Josiah's "military action", even though these sites were dedicated to the national god YHWH (2 Kings 23:15-28).<sup>116</sup> It appears therefore that although the 'reforms' of Josiah have the appearance of an outward ideological motivation, they have at their heart a desire for political and economic control. However, Coggins has speculated that Josiah may not have been the great 'reformer' that the texts make him out to be, but could rather have had his political and economic conquests of the northern territories assigned noble and religious motives by the post-exilic Deuteronomistic parties, in order to support their own ideological revolution.<sup>117</sup> Nevertheless, this does not alter the demonstrable political goals of Josiah's actions.

Lang has cited economic control as one possible reason for the conflict between the supporters of Baal and YHWH in the northern kingdom in the ninth century, despite the presence of polytheistic practices in the north:

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<sup>115</sup> Claburn, "The Fiscal Basis of Josiah's Reforms," 18-20; Philip R. Davies, *Scribes and Schools: The Canonization of the Hebrew Scriptures*, (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), 131-134.

<sup>116</sup> As will be discussed further in chapter 3.

<sup>117</sup> Richard Coggins, "What does Deuteronomistic Mean?," in *Those Elusive Deuteronomists: The Phenomenon of Pan-Deuteronomism*, edited by Linda S. Schearing and Steven L. McKenzie, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 25.

Perhaps the newly introduced cult, with its center on or at the Carmel mount, is very popular and leads to a financial loss for Yahweh's priesthood. We can see that these priests are ill-disposed towards Baal and his, certainly, foreign priests, and that the rivalry can escalate into open conflict.<sup>118</sup>

This supposition is in accord with what is known of the general economic state in the highlands of Iron Age Israel and its surrounds.<sup>119</sup> However, this theory is misguided, as it takes at face value the biblical claim that worship of Baal was imported into a purely Yahwistic area. To make it more practicable, Lang's theory can be turned around: worship of Baal led to an accrual of revenue to those sites which did not go to the priests of YHWH. A similar reform was undertaken by the priests of Aten against the cult of Amun in Egypt during the reign of Akhenaten.<sup>120</sup> Just as was the case in Egypt, the Israelite cult was closely linked to the political situation, which in turn was linked to the greater national economic state. Lang also raises the notion of the ancient temples functioning as banking institutions.<sup>121</sup> Centralisation for such institutions can mean the difference between small and large profits, however, Lang does caution against overstating this concept. The presence of a party opposed to the worship of Baal is not the same as a YHWH-alone party. Nor does that party necessarily promote an iconoclastic ideology. Rather, there is more of monolatry hinted at here, sowing the seeds of a later monotheism. Lang notes that

The violence and radicalism of certain episodes should not mislead us. The opponents of the Phoenician Baal are not monotheists, nor do they worship Yahweh exclusively to the detriment of all other gods. One can realise only later that the beginnings of the

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<sup>118</sup> Bernhard Lang, *Monotheism and the Prophetic Minority: An Essay in Biblical History and Sociology*, (Sheffield: The Almond Press, 1983), 27.

<sup>119</sup> As is outlined in Simkins, "Patronage and the Political Economy of Monarchic Israel," 123-144; Muth, "Economic Influences on Early Israel," 77-92; Stevens, *Temples, Tithes and Taxes*, 11-13.

<sup>120</sup> John Baines, "The Dawn of the Amarna Age," in *Amenhotep III: Perspectives on His Reign*, edited by David O'Connor and Eric H. Cline, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998), 271-273.

<sup>121</sup> Lang, *Monotheism and the Prophetic Minority*, 27. Stevens has an entire chapter dedicated to the "Temple as Bank" in *Temples, Tithes and Taxes*, 136-166. The notion that temples functioned as banks in ancient Israel will be discussed further in chapter 3.

Yahweh-alone fanaticism lie here, and it is this which will finally drive out polytheism.<sup>122</sup>

Lang has broached the idea that a monolatrous Yahwistic cult was the natural progression of a ritualistic observance, for a nation that was continually experiencing some form of crisis. This observance is the temporary dropping of all polytheistic rituals while in great peril – famine, plague, invasion and other such disasters - in the hope that the single worshipped god or goddess will hear the cries of the people and come to their aid. Thus, Lang writes:

If we suppose that ‘temporary monolatry’ is known in Israel and practiced from time to time, then we can, at least provisionally, consider it the prototype of the Yahweh-alone idea. Israel, afflicted by continual inner social crises and military-imperialistic threats from the outside, is a milieu in which the idea can arise of adopting, not just a temporary, but a permanent monolatry of the state god. Consequently, Yahweh-alone worship can be understood as a crisis cult which is continued beyond the actual crisis situation. Or, rather, the crisis situation is considered as permanent.<sup>123</sup>

In principle, this view is extremely persuasive. However, there is little evidence<sup>124</sup> to link it to such a vehement and iconoclastic condemnation of the worship of other gods for a populace used to engaging in such worship. It does however speak to the notion of the development of the ethnos Israel via the resistance spoken of by Faust.<sup>125</sup> A people constantly under threat from external forces is one which will come together to form an identity. Faust uses the example of pressures applied to Israel by the Philistines to illustrate this point, but given the vagaries of Israel’s geographical location it can be argued that this

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<sup>122</sup> Lang, *Monotheism and the Prophetic Minority*, 30.

<sup>123</sup> Lang, *Monotheism and the Prophetic Minority*, 33-36.

<sup>124</sup> Aside from the biblical texts, which as has been seen are ultimately the product of Deuteronomistic ideologies. One of the difficulties with uncovering archaeological evidence of iconoclastic practices is self-evident. In particular, the destruction of *asherim*, an item most likely constructed of wood, could be evidenced in the ash remains found in many *bāmôt*, or these ashes may be the remains of other votive or sacrificial fires. It is impossible to tell. For example the evidence from Tel Kitan as outlined by Emanuel Eisenberg, “Kitan, Tel,” in *The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land*, Volume 3, edited by Ephraim Stern, Ayelet Lewinson-Gilboa and Joseph Aviram, (Jerusalem: The Israel Exploration Society, 1993), 878-881.

<sup>125</sup> Faust, *Israel’s Ethnogenesis*, 135-137.

process was a continual one. The Deuteronomists were therefore able to utilise this continual process of identity (re-)formation to alter the language by which Israel identified itself. In doing so they were able to assert a greater level of control over the population. Furthermore, there is considerable evidence pointing to other factors which led to the elimination of so many aspects of the Israelite cult, *especially* the elements directly related to the worship of the god YHWH, upon whom such a 'temporary monolatry' was focused. One could easily imagine that a people obliged to abandon all of their other gods as a consequence of their suffering, would have taken every opportunity in every place, to worship the sole deity upon whom their devotion is now entirely focused. Therefore, while the notion of a 'temporary monolatry' is a plausible contributing factor in the changes which can be seen in the officially endorsed cultic practices, it is certainly not the only one.<sup>126</sup>

## II.v. Conclusion

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Thus it can be concluded that while it may be possible to identify a period for the ethnogenesis of Israel as an ideological polity identified overall by that term, as Killebrew does,<sup>127</sup> this does not distinguish 'Israel' as reflected in the Bible. While not mutually exclusive, ethnic markers and cultic demarcations are not the same things. The presence of a people called Israel in the Merneptah stele reflects the presence in the ANE of a group

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<sup>126</sup> Lang is not suggesting it as the sole driving force behind the cultic changes, but is proposing it as part of a general argument. It should also be noted, in agreement with Lang, that the actual solidification of the monotheistic aspects of the cult was not completed until after the Babylonian exile, and that therefore it is impossible to fully comprehend the true nature of the changes or their motivations through the post-exilic redactions. This redaction clearly reflects laws developed by a community in continual fear of persecution, or in which persecution is perceived. Such laws would reflect clear cultic reasons for this persecution, along with thorough examples of the ways in which their newly monotheistic God has protected them from various threats and other tribulations. The argument here is simply that this is not the only factor, and therefore should not be considered as such, no matter how persuasive it seems. Gnuse, *No Other Gods*, 90-91; Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism*, 193-194.

<sup>127</sup> Killebrew, *Biblical Peoples and Ethnicity*, 149-185, in particular 185.

known (or becoming known) by that name, but does not in any way reflect the beliefs held by that group. The reflection in the Bible of heterogeneous practices *before* the time of Dtr's reform, with the insistence by Dtr that these are *no longer* acceptable (while also acknowledging that they once were), indicates that 'Israel' itself once was pluralistic and that it is this Israel which is referred to in any source pre-Dtr.

It is also evident from an analysis of this development, that it is impossible to separate the religious from the political and the economic in the ancient world, and that economics played a crucial role in the development of the ancient Israelite society and its religious institutions. The implementation of a centralised bureaucracy in ancient Judahite society made the next step, the full centralisation of the religious system, a valuable economic move for the Levitical priesthood as they came to power in Jerusalem in the period following Hezekiah's reforms, and into the reign of Josiah.

### III. Centralisation, *Bāmôth*, *Maşşeboth*, Tauromorph Imagery.

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The centralisation of cultic practice in the Jerusalem Temple by Dtr during the time of Josiah and the period immediately preceding the exile, had as its goal the systematic elimination of all external shrines and sanctuaries, the extermination or relocation of their priests, and the destruction of any and all iconographical or symbolic items residing within or related to them. To this end the DH is framed by a major aniconistic rhetoric also directed against *bāmôth*.<sup>1</sup> Along with this rhetoric *maşşeboth*, *asherim* and tauromorph imagery also came under heavy criticism from the reformers. The biblical texts demonstrate that this was not a trouble free process and that considerable resistance was mounted by the people. The notion that the authors of the DH appear to have found it necessary to continually repeat their proscriptions is evidence of this – condemnations of *bāmôth* are too numerous for a full list to be provided here, but a selection includes: 1 Kings 3:2-3, 12:31-32, 13:2, 13:32-33; 2 Kings 12:3, 15:4, 17:9; Jeremiah 7:31; Ezekiel 6:3; Hosea 10:8; Amos 7:9; Micah 1:5. The proscriptions in the early prophets are most likely directed at non-Yahwistic *bāmôth* or are Dtr glosses.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Stuart Lasine, "Reading Jeroboam's Intentions: Intertextuality, Rhetoric, and History in 1 Kings 12," in *Reading Between Texts: Intertextuality and the Hebrew Bible*, edited by D.N. Fewell, (Louisville, Ky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992), 147-148.

<sup>2</sup> Blenkinsopp considers that sections of Amos which refer to Bethel are glosses which "reflect the extension of Josiah's reforms into the territory of the Northern Kingdom absorbed a century earlier into the Assyria [*sic*] empire... Dtr never tires of condemning the setting up of the Bethel cult by Jeroboam". Blenkinsopp, *A History of Prophecy in Israel*, (Louisville, Ky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 75-76. This is reflected in the curse following Jeroboam's establishment of the shrine at Bethel in 1 Kings 13:1-3. The significance of this is discussed in Antony F. Campbell and Mark A. O'Brien, *Unfolding the Deuteronomistic History*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 376-377.

What follows will be an examination of the evidence for and validity of, centralisation as a primary concern for Dtr as demonstrated throughout the DH. The elements of centralisation include legislating against Yahwistic *bāmôth*, *maššeboth*, and tauiromorph, or bovine, imagery associated with YHWH. The importance of such aniconistic measures to centralisation has been noted in passing by Ahlström, who observes their importance to Hezekiah's reform but focuses instead on the political rather than economic ramifications of such policies.<sup>3</sup> The importance of these items from the point of view of this study is in combination. If these items serve as criteria for religious sites, and if those sites are places where sacrifice and administrative matters are conducted, then it follows that where the elements and practice of cult goes so too does the bureaucracy. In particular, foci of communal worship which resulted in the conduct of festivals required considerable administration and a financial basis.<sup>4</sup> If administrative control is to be achieved, then it must necessarily be preceded by control of anything which could threaten it. It will be demonstrated that by eliminating 'external' foci of worship which could function in this way, Dtr hoped to gain control of the religious practices enough to centralise them at the Jerusalem Temple. The biblical and extra-biblical evidence associated with each of these aspects of the reform will be considered below. The Yahwistic legitimacy of each will be assessed in conjunction with possible economic motives that Dtr may have had for campaigning against them. One iconographic aspect of the Deuteronomistic reforms will be omitted from this chapter, that is, the goddess Asherah and her symbol the asherah will be given an in-depth analysis in chapter 6.

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<sup>3</sup> Gösta Werner Ahlström, *Royal Administration and National Religion in Ancient Palestine*, (Leiden: Brill, 1982), 66-67.

<sup>4</sup> Aubet notes the establishment of 'periodic markets' which served to finance such festivals, Maria Eugenia Aubet, *Commerce and Colonization in the Ancient Near East*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 30, n.10.

*Bāmôth*, *maššeboth*, tauromorph imagery and *asherim* are all portable or easily established items which serve to direct and concentrate religious focus.<sup>5</sup> Smaller shrines and items may have been utilised in household cults,<sup>6</sup> while larger items such as *maššeboth* were housed in *bāmôth* along with fully fledged altars.<sup>7</sup> Such places formed a centre for community activities and, as they grew, turned into centres of administration, finance and employment. That temples across the ancient world functioned in these roles has been noted by scholars such as Stevens, Liverani, Orlin, and most recently Ristvet,<sup>8</sup> who have noted that similarities can be drawn between such establishments and those in ancient Israel and Judah.

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<sup>5</sup> *Bāmôth* in particular were places where sacrifice was conducted, Janice E. Catron, "Temple and *Bāmāh*: Some Considerations," in *The Pitcher is Broken. Memorial Essays for Gösta W. Ahlström*, edited by Steven W. Holloway and Lowell K. Handy, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 154; Ziony Zevit, *The Religions of Ancient Israel. A Synthesis of Parallactic Approaches*, (New York: Continuum, 2001), 626-627.

<sup>6</sup> As has been noted by Albertz, "Personal Piety," in *Religious Diversity in Ancient Israel and Judah*, 142-143; Ephraim Stern, "Religion in Palestine in the Assyrian and Persian Periods," in *The Crisis of Israelite Religion. Transformation of Religious Tradition in Exilic and Post-Exilic Times*, edited by Bob Becking and Marjo C.A. Korpel, (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 249-252; Judith M. Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah. Evidence for a Hebrew Goddess*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 199; An example of this is the JPFs, which have been found primarily in household settings – Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses and Images of God*, 328-9; Raz Kletter, *The Judean Pillar-Figurines and the Archaeology of Asherah*, (Oxford: Tempvs Reparatum, 1996), 61-67. The JPFs will be discussed further in chapter 6.

<sup>7</sup> William G. Dever, "The Silence of the Text: An Archaeological Commentary on 2 Kings 23," in *Scripture and Other Artifacts: Essays on the Bible and Archaeology in Honor of Philip J. King*, edited by Michael D. Coogan, J. Cheryl Exum and Lawrence E. Stager, (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994), 148-149; Miller argues that the primary function of *bāmôth* was as a place for sacrifice, however, this does not take into consideration any of the social functions which would accompany such activities, Patrick D. Miller, *Israelite Religion and Biblical Theology. Collected Essays*, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 172-174.

<sup>8</sup> Marty E. Stevens, *Temples, Tithes and Taxes. The Temple and the Economic Life of Ancient Israel*, (Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 2006), 64-166, and "Tithes and Taxes: The Economic Role of the Jerusalem Temple in its Ancient Near Eastern Context," (PhD diss., Union Theological Seminary and Presbyterian School of Christian Education, 2002), 22-230; Lauren Ristvet, *Ritual, Performance, and Politics in the Ancient Near East*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 194; Mario Liverani, *The Ancient Near East: History, Society and Economy*, (New York: Routledge, 2014), 62-65 and "The Near East: The Bronze Age," in *The Ancient Economy: Evidence and Models*, edited by J.G. Manning and Ian Morris, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 48-52; for a symbiotic relationship between palace, temple and community Louis Lawrence Orlin, *Life and Thought in the Ancient Near East*, (Michigan: The University of Michigan Press, 2010), 162-164.

### III.ii. Centralisation

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Centralisation as a concern of Dtr appears in Deut. 12:5, 11, 23, 14:23-24, 16:2-11, 26:2; 1 Kings 3:2, 13:2, 32-33, 14:23, 15:14; 2 Kings 12:3, 14:4, 15:4, 15:35, 16:4, 17:9, 11, 32, 18:4, 21-23, 21:3, in the reform of Josiah in 2 Kings 23, and has been regularly noted by scholars.<sup>9</sup> Römer is adamant that exclusivity of YHWH and cultic centralisation is a major theme in Deuteronomy, to the point where he is able to state that “There is no Deuteronomy without centralization of worship.”<sup>10</sup> This is demonstrated in Deut. 12. It is evident that polytheistic practices were condemned by Dtr in the biblical literature, but not overtly until the exilic period. That there was a strong iconoclastic flavour to this is made clear by Levinson,<sup>11</sup> and this change could easily represent a shift from monolatry to monotheism as outlined by Lemche.<sup>12</sup> This concern is made manifest throughout the DH in the form of cautions to the people to never worship at any site other than the Jerusalem Temple.<sup>13</sup> This is commonly classified as the *šēm* theology because it is characterised by a stress on the ‘place that the Lord will place his name’ (for example, Deut. 12:5, 21; 14:23;

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<sup>9</sup> Such as Sandra L. Richter, “The Place of the Name in Deuteronomy,” *VT* 57.3 (2007), 345; Bernard M. Levinson, *Deuteronomy and the Hermeneutics of Legal Innovation*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), in particular 23-52; Thomas Römer, “The Book of Deuteronomy,” in *The History of Israel’s Traditions: The Heritage of Martin Noth*, edited by Steven L. McKenzie and L. Patrick Graham, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 201.

<sup>10</sup> Römer, “The Book of Deuteronomy,” 201, *contra* Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1976), 49. Craigie’s dismissal of the integral nature of centralisation to Deuteronomy is based on the notion that the aspects of cultic practice which Dtr sought to eliminate were either syncretistic or foreign.

<sup>11</sup> Levinson, *Deuteronomy and the Hermeneutics of Legal Innovation*, in particular chapter 12, “The Innovation of Cultic Centralization in Deuteronomy 12,” 23-52. He states of Deut. 12 that “This introductory chapter of the legal corpus of Deuteronomy (chapters 12-26) mandates two radical transformations of Israelite religion.” 23. These two critical alterations amount to the innovation of centralisation with the abolition of all other places of worship, and provision for the slaughter of animals for food away from a sacrificial setting, something which hitherto had been unheard of as all slaughter was considered tantamount to sacrifice.

<sup>12</sup> Niels Peter Lemche, *The Old Testament Between Theology and History. A Critical Survey*, (Louisville: WJK Press, 2008), 81-87.

<sup>13</sup> Judges 2:20-21; 1 Kings 9:8-9; 2 Kings 17:6-8, 18:11-12, 22:16-17, 24:2-4, 19-20. Even the righteous acts of Josiah are not enough to atone for the actions of the people and previous kings, 2 Kings 23:25-27.

16:2; 26:2).<sup>14</sup> Sandra Richter describes centralised worship as “the defining criterion of community faithfulness.”<sup>15</sup> The Temple is the place where the name of the Lord resides, and is the specific location that the Lord has designated as set apart for worship. This formulation occurs many times throughout the DH, including thrice in the central passage of Deut. 12:3, 5, 11.<sup>16</sup> This *šem* theology replaced a more anthropomorphic *kavod* (כבוד) theology in which the Lord physically lived in the Temple, which was thus rendered holy.<sup>17</sup>

Centralisation as a primary concern for Dtr has been advanced by numerous scholars.<sup>18</sup> While some aspects of Dtr’s theology are more immediately apparent than centralisation, for example the call to monolatry as is typified by the first commandment. Such assertions lead naturally back to the central sanctuary in Jerusalem. In promoting centralisation, Dtr found it necessary to strip the cult of anything which would detract from that goal. This included legislating against any person or place which potentially opposed their mandate. As will be demonstrated below in chapter 5, this involved killing all priests who did not conform with the stipulations of Dtr’s reform (2 Kings 23:5, 20) and relocating all ‘friendly’ priests into Jerusalem (2 Kings 23:8-9). It also comprised a significant

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<sup>14</sup> A full list of the passages in which this expression occurs is presented by Moshe Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School*, (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1983), 324-325.

<sup>15</sup> Sandra L. Richter, “The Place of the Name in Deuteronomy,” *VT* 57.3 (2007), 342. Richter argues for a point of origin of this motif at Mt Ebal. Also Tryggve N.D. Mettinger, “Cult Image or Aniconism in the First Temple?,” in *Ancient Israel in its Near Eastern Context*, edited by Yairah Amit, Ehud Ben Zvi, Israel Finkelstein and Oded Lipschits, (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 274, who provides an analysis of the importance of cult centralisation for Dtr’s theology.

<sup>16</sup> The formulation also occurs, amongst other places, in Deut. 14:23, 16:6, 26:2; and variations of the formulation in 1 Kings 3:2 and 8:43.

<sup>17</sup> Mettinger, “Cult Image or Aniconism in the First Temple?,” 274.

<sup>18</sup> For example the overview of scholarship in Peter T. Vogt, *Deuteronomistic Theology and the Significance of Torah. A Reappraisal*, (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 32-97. The alteration of the cult to accommodate centralisation is discussed by Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School*, 212-214. Weinfeld describes the alterations as “a direct consequence of the implementation of cult centralisation and form the legal basis of the religious reformation.” 213; Norbert Lohfink, “Distribution of the Functions of Power: The Laws Concerning Public Offices in Deuteronomy 16:18-18:22,” in *A Song of Power and the Power of Song*, edited by Duane L. Christensen, (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1993), 336-352. Lohfink sees the restructuring of power in Deuteronomy not so much as centralisation, but also as taking away some of the power of previous authorities (such as the king), in favour of increased power of the priests and prophets, 348-349.

iconoclastic element in the destruction and desecration of altars (2 Kings 23:8, 12-13, 15-16), cutting down and burning of *asherim* (2 Kings 23:6), and burning of horses and chariots (2 Kings 23:11).<sup>19</sup>

While it has been a feature of the work of scholarship to underscore the cultic function of a religious theme underlying centralisation,<sup>20</sup> the economic benefits of centralisation are numerous. The close relationship between state and religious bureaucracies in the ancient world, meant that bringing both together at a central location gave the bureaucracy greater control of monetary flow both in and out of state and Temple treasuries. This is evident in the biblical texts with the focus on not only tithes but correct payment of tradesmen in passages such as 2 Chronicles 34:8-17.<sup>21</sup> Naturally, the further afield the expenditure, the higher the risk to the revenue. Furthermore, the function of temples in the ancient world as banks<sup>22</sup> of a sort and also as major landholders, landlords and employers not only increased the central sanctuary's revenue by bringing in the income from appropriated lands and clients from external sanctuaries, but also decreased the overheads payable on maintaining rituals at other locations. In short, each sanctuary's revenue and livestock would go toward profit to be 'banked' and loaned out at interest, or towards the observance of religious practice.<sup>23</sup> In a multi-sanctuary system, the demands on

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<sup>19</sup> In 2 Kings 23:24 Josiah is described as having had abolished "the necromancers and the mediums, the idols and the fetishes – all the detestable things that were to be seen in the land of Judah and Jerusalem."

<sup>20</sup> A.D.H. Mayes, *New Century Bible Commentary: Deuteronomy*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 59; Vogt, *Deuteronomistic Theology and the Significance of Torah*, 83.

<sup>21</sup> This passage is the best example of the primacy of financial matters over and above cultic ones. Shaphan is concerned to assure the king that the tradesmen and overseers were honest before reporting the discovery of the scroll. This is reported both in 2 Chronicles 34:8-17 and 2 Kings 22:9-10.

<sup>22</sup> The concept that Temples functioned as banks in the ancient world will be dealt with below.

<sup>23</sup> Baruch A. Levine, "Tracing the Biblical Accounting Register: Terminology and the Signification of Quantity," in *Commerce and Monetary Systems in the Ancient World: Means of Transmission and Cultural Interaction*, edited by Robert Rollinger and Christoph Ulf, (Austria: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2004), 425.

the lands and livestock to service such practices are furnished by the assets of that particular sanctuary alone, no matter how finite they may be.

However, in the case of a centralised system, there is greater scope for the one temple complex to engage in activities which generate a profit on a larger scale. If assets of decentralised sanctuaries were to fall under the jurisdiction of a centralised temple complex, this would increase revenue for that centralised system yet again. Thus, even considering that there could have been more scope for some loss of revenue during transport of tithes and taxes due to deception or bandit activity, a central sanctuary would be in a position to earn a profit from the decreased overall draw on total production of the combined assets, and the increased amount of revenue free to be invested or loaned out at interest.<sup>24</sup> An example of such eventualities can be seen in the Wilbur Papyrus, detailing temple and state transactions from the time of Ramesses V. Janssen speculates that not only did the temple complex not pay taxes to the state, but that the reverse was true – the state paid a tax to the temple in exchange for leasing land from it at a rate of seven and a half percent.<sup>25</sup> This is not to say that the specific intention of the Deuteronomists who strived for centralisation was purely fiscal. However, that the opportunity existed to amass greater wealth from centralisation is clear.

The term תרביִת, meaning ‘interest’, is mentioned several times in the biblical text. Baruch A. Levine has identified three main passages in which it occurs, including Leviticus 25:36-37 which forbids the charging of interest to another Israelite. He notes that this

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<sup>24</sup> de Vaux notes that the Herodian Temple appears to have lent at interest, as reflected in the gospels. de Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions*, (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1968), 170-171.

<sup>25</sup> Jac. J. Janssen, “The Role of the Temple in the Egyptian Economy During the New Kingdom,” in *State and Temple Economy in the Ancient Near East*, edited by Edward Lipiński, (Leuven: Departement Oriëntalistiek, 1979), 509-511.

primarily applies to consumables loaned to a person in need.<sup>26</sup> If the biblical proscription on the charging of interest applies only to the loan of goods to those in need for immediate relief, then the prohibition may not apply to lending for financial gain as would have been undertaken by temples and private families.<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, Mauss has noted the social obligation involved in the payment of interest, even where interest rates are not specified as in the case of generosity.<sup>28</sup> The ability to repay a loan or gift at interest, Mauss argues, is a matter of pride and respect.<sup>29</sup> By this reckoning, even if the charging of interest were not legislated, the borrower would have been obligated to repay the loan at interest in some form or another.<sup>30</sup> Officially, the rate of interest was dependent on the circumstances and plight of the borrower. Thus de Vaux begins his section on loans with the statement “When an Israelite fell on hard times and was reduced to borrowing”.<sup>31</sup> This does not take into consideration situations in which an Israelite required a loan for non-urgent purposes. Such purposes may or may not have been intended in the proscription laid down by the biblical authors. Therefore, by focusing worship on one sacred site the central sanctuary stood to profit as the hub of all sacrifices and priestly activity. Its investment in animals and produce for sacrifices concentrates financial expenditure, and thus profit, on one centrally managed site. This has the advantage of allowing a large bulk of revenue to be dedicated to further investment and interest bearing loans. As an employer and landholder with revenue

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<sup>26</sup> Baruch A. Levine, “Tracing the Biblical Accounting Register,” 425; *contra* Morris Silver, “Prophets and Markets Revisited,” in *Social Justice in the Ancient World*, edited by K.D. Irani and Morris Silver, (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1995), 187.

<sup>27</sup> Knight notes that the interest rate charged by the temple complex in Old Babylonia was twenty percent, compared to the thirty three point three percent which private families often charged. Douglas A. Knight, *Law, Power, and Justice in Ancient Israel*, (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011), 237-238.

<sup>28</sup> Marcel Mauss, *The Gift*, (New York: W.W. Norton, 1990), 39-43.

<sup>29</sup> Mauss, *The Gift*, 46.

<sup>30</sup> Mauss notes that “Even if a subject receives a blanket from his chief for some service he has rendered, he will give two in return on the occasion of a marriage in the chief’s family, or the enthronement of the chief’s son, etc.” *The Gift*, 42.

<sup>31</sup> de Vaux, *Ancient Israel, Its Life and Institutions*, 170.

incoming from tithes, rent, interest earned from loans and other investments, combined with decreased overheads furnishing ritual practice, the Jerusalem Temple was in a position to receive enormous gains from Dtr's focus on centralisation.

Furthermore, in centralising the cultus in Judah and Israel, Dtr were compelled, by their own reforms, to re-write the sacrificial and judicial laws.<sup>32</sup> Before the time of Deuteronomy sacrifice was undertaken not purely for the expression of devotion to a deity, but also functioned in the role of slaughter of meat for consumption.<sup>33</sup> In short, all slaughter constituted sacrifice and was conducted at a local sanctuary.<sup>34</sup> The alteration to this in Deut. 12:20-22 made it possible for the people to continue to have regular consumption of meat *without* the sacrificial obligation attached to it.<sup>35</sup> Under Deuteronomic decree sacrifice was now only to be conducted at the central sanctuary in Jerusalem (Deut. 12:26-27). Other laws, too, had to be revised in order to accommodate the new policy of centralisation. This is evidenced in Deut. 16:18-20. Previously, as was common throughout the ANE, judicial

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<sup>32</sup> Bernard M. Levinson, "The Reconceptualization of Kingship in Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic History's Transformation of Torah," *VT* 51.4 (October, 2001), 520; Jeffrey H. Tigay, *The JPS Torah Commentary. Deuteronomy*, (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1996), 120-127; Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School*, 212-217; Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Treasures Old and New: Essays in the Theology of the Pentateuch*, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2004), 180-182; E.W. Nicholson, *Deuteronomy and Tradition*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1967), 54-55; Mayes, *Deuteronomy*, 225-228.

<sup>33</sup> Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School*, 213-214. Weinfeld notes that "before the reform all slaughter – except that of game animals – was deemed to be a sacral act and was prohibited even for non-sacrificial purposes unless the blood was sprinkled upon the altar", 213. Meat was not as common a staple food in the ancient world as it is today. Vegetables and grains made up the bulk of the people's diets, and this was supplemented with meat when it was available or on special occasions such as the Passover festival. When it is specified that all slaughter was conducted in a sacrificial way, it does not follow that this was a regular occurrence, and certainly not a daily one. An overview of the production and consumption of produce and livestock in Iron I Israel is undertaken by Baruch Rosen, "Subsistence Economy in Iron Age I," in *From Nomadism to Monarchy*, edited by Israel Finkelstein and Nadav Na'aman, (Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi, 1994), 347-349.

<sup>34</sup> Mayes, *Deuteronomy*, 225, 227-228. Mayes notes that Dtr had two options in restricting sacrifice to the central sanctuary: forbid the slaughter of animals altogether, or secularise it overall. Dtr took the second option.

<sup>35</sup> Tigay has referred to this as a secularisation of slaughter, which in the sense that it is not overtly a sacrificial act is true. However, the term secular indicates to the modern mind a complete separation from the cultic sphere which would not have been the case for the ancient Israelites. Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 125-126.

matters were settled at the local shrine or temple.<sup>36</sup> Having not only legislated against this practice, but also having attempted to restrict the role of the King in the judiciary, Dtr were compelled to implement a new system of judges to be appointed in regional cities and towns throughout the region. Judges were now to be appointed and available for consultation at the city gates. More serious matters were to be referred to the Jerusalem Temple, and not the local shrines as had previously been the case.<sup>37</sup> Tigay lists three possible reasons for such an alteration, the second of which was to make provision for the income of displaced priests.<sup>38</sup> In legislating in this way Dtr hoped to solidify their hold over Temple income by requiring the elimination of *bāmôth* and other local cultic installations. However, the success of this reform is dubious in the pre-exilic era.<sup>39</sup>

### III.iii. *Bāmôth*

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By its very nature, cultic centralisation involved legislating against and the destruction of *bāmôth*.<sup>40</sup> *Bāmôth* appear throughout the biblical text, and are prominent in such passages as 1 Sam. 1:3 and 1 Kings 3:4, which feature major characters worshipping at them. *Bāmôth* were places where animals were slaughtered,<sup>41</sup> not just for sacrifice but for food, as has been mentioned above. They were also places where people came together for

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<sup>36</sup> Levinson, "The Reconceptualization of Kingship in Deuteronomy," 520; Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School*, 233-36.

<sup>37</sup> For example Deut. 17:8-9. Bernard M. Levinson, "The Reconceptualization of Kingship in Deuteronomy," 522-523, and *Deuteronomy and the Hermeneutics of Legal Innovation*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 98-143. Levinson states that "It was specifically the recourse to the local sanctuary or altar for the resolution of such ambiguous cases that necessitated the transformation by the authors of Deuteronomy." *Deuteronomy and the Hermeneutics of Legal Innovation*, 114; Lohfink, "Distribution of the Functions of Power," 339-343.

<sup>38</sup> Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 164-165.

<sup>39</sup> Lohfink, "Distribution of the Functions of Power," 346.

<sup>40</sup> Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, xx-xxi.

<sup>41</sup> That sacrifice was an integral activity carried out at *bāmôth* is outlined by Tryggve N.D. Mettinger, *No Graven Image? Israelite Aniconism in Its Near Eastern Context*, (Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell International, 1995), 30.

festivals and other religious activities, and which housed bureaucratic elements of the local community. As such, they were at least in part economic entities.<sup>42</sup> *Bāmôth* were also legitimate places of worship as established throughout the patriarchal narratives, which Dtr do not refute in their history,<sup>43</sup> although they are not fully accepted by Dtr in the legislation set out during their reform.<sup>44</sup> Dtr position *bāmôth* as obsolete and no longer appropriate once YHWH has selected a place for his name to reside.<sup>45</sup> All extant *bāmôth* contain an altar, and most contain a sacred tree or post, and at least one *maššeba*.<sup>46</sup> Major *bāmôth* have been uncovered at Hazor,<sup>47</sup> Arad,<sup>48</sup> Tel-Dan,<sup>49</sup> and the Bull Site (near Dothan).<sup>50</sup> Major features of *bāmôth* were the presence of an altar, a *maššeba*, and according to the biblical texts an asherah (as in 1 Kings 14:23 and 2 Kings 18:4), all of which was surrounded by a temenos wall. To date, no positively identified asherah has been uncovered in a *bāmâ* (or

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<sup>42</sup> This is demonstrated in the workings of temples and other places of worship throughout the ANE, as noted by William W. Hallo, "God, King, and Man at Yale," in *State and Temple Economy in the Ancient Near East*, edited by Edward Lipiński, (Leuven: Departement Oriëntalistiek, 1979), 106-107.

<sup>43</sup> As is clear from the acknowledgement of Shiloh as a prominent place of meeting in texts such as Joshua 18:10 and Judges 21:19.

<sup>44</sup> In particular Deut. 12:1-7.

<sup>45</sup> Specifically Deut. 12:1-7 which specifies all aspects of life involved with *bāmôth*, and that the reason these are to cease is because the Lord has now selected a place for his name to reside. Also Zevit, *The Religions of Ancient Israel*, 457-479, who gives an analysis of the reigns of the kings of Judah including the establishment and condemnations of *bāmôth*; Lasine, "Reading Jeroboam's Intentions," 147. Lasine notes that "The fact that these cultic actions and objects may have been as firmly grounded in Yahwistic tradition as those located at the central Temple (if not more so) was not important; what mattered was that those still in control used their remaining power to (re)define what was tradition and what was anathema."

<sup>46</sup> A brief discussion of this is provided by Diana V. Edelman, "Cultic Sites and Complexes Beyond the Jerusalem Temple," in *Religious Diversity in Ancient Israel and Judah*, edited by Francesca Stavrakopoulou and John Barton, (London: T&T Clark, 2010), 87-89. There is also a brief outline undertaken by Mettinger, *No Graven Image*, 29-32.

<sup>47</sup> As excavated by Yadin ongoing from 1955. Yadin's finds are summarized in Yigael Yadin, *Hazor: the Rediscovery of a Great Citadel of the Bible*, (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1975).

<sup>48</sup> Ze'ev Herzog, "The Fortress Mound at Tel Arad," *Tel Aviv* 29.1 (2002), 3-109. Arad is identified by Dever as a temple proper rather than a *bāmâ* in "Were There Temples in Ancient Israel? The Archaeological Evidence," in *Text, Artifact, and Image, Revealing Ancient Israelite Religion*, edited by Gary Beckman and Theodore J. Lewis, (Providence: Brown Judaic Studies, 2006), 300-303.

<sup>49</sup> Eran Arie, "Reconsidering the Iron Age II Strata at Tel Dan: Archaeological and Historical Implications," *Tel Aviv* 35.1 (2008), 6-64, in particular 7-11; George Athas, *The Tel Dan Inscription: A Reappraisal and a New Interpretation*, (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2003), in particular 13-15.

<sup>50</sup> Amihai Mazar, "The 'Bull Site': An Iron Age I Open Cult Place," *BASOR* 247 (Summer, 1982), 27-42; summaries of the findings from Tel Dan and the Bull Site are provided by Zevit, *The Religions of Ancient Israel*, 176-196. Further analysis of the Bull Site will be undertaken below.

anywhere), but this is likely the result of the material from which they were constructed. All evidence points to a wooden construct, and wood is far less likely to survive the test of time than stone, metal, or ceramic objects.<sup>51</sup> According to Catron, it is also likely that *bāmôth* included an enclosed section.<sup>52</sup> This would have been used for meals, storage and other priestly functions.

Unlike many of the other cultic elements examined in this thesis, there is no outright condemnation of *bāmôth per se* in the biblical text, merely of the practice of utilising them once they had become obsolete in the eyes of Dtr. The subtle manoeuvring in such a situation must have been difficult for Dtr, as *bāmôth* were a prominent feature of ANE life for hundreds of years.<sup>53</sup> *Bāmôth* were a focus of worship. A plurality of shrines served to weaken Dtr's control over the cult, whereas centralisation could serve as an instrument of Deuteronomistic control. This control enabled the regulation of the cult by Dtr, as well as providing them with the ability to oversee associated fiscal expenditure and income. Hence, the move toward centralisation could serve to render *bāmôth* initially redundant, and in the long term forbidden. The biblical material contains three genres of literature and attitudes regarding *bāmôth* – stories about early Israelites establishing or worshipping at shrines and high places (Gen. 28:18); commands that it is no longer acceptable to do so (Deut. 12:4-5);

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<sup>51</sup> Zevit notes that many *maššeboth* appear to be arranged so that a tall thin one is situated next to a short squat one. He speculates that this could be a reflection of male and female deities, *The Religions of Ancient Israel*, 257.

<sup>52</sup> Catron, "Temple and *Bāmāh*: Some Considerations," 164-165.

<sup>53</sup> The Bible mentions shrines and sanctuaries during the period of the Judges, and also records the establishment of sites such as Shiloh well before the establishment of the monarchy. Altars are established numerous times, especially in Genesis with the building of an altar in Bethel in Genesis 12:8. Shrines are noted in several places in Judges, such as 17:5, while Shiloh is established as a major cultic centre and place of congregation in Joshua 18:1. A comprehensive study of the archaeological sites considered to have been cultic in nature is undertaken by Ziony Zevit, *The Religions of Ancient Israel. A Synthesis of Parallactic Approaches*, (New York: Continuum, 2001). A brief outline of many of the sites considered to have been contemporaneous with Dtr is available in Ephraim Stern, "Religion in Palestine in the Assyrian and Persian Periods," in *The Crisis of Israelite Religion. Transformation of Religious Tradition in Exilic and Post-Exilic Times*, edited by Bob Becking and Marjo C.A. Korpel, (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 245-255.

and condemnations of kings who either failed to abolish *bāmôth* or went so far as to promote or establish new ones (2 Kings 21:3-5). This second theme is reinforced with the stress on ‘the place where he shall name’.<sup>54</sup> The transitional phase between the legitimacy of external places of worship and their subsequent condemnation is dealt with by Dtr in 1 Kings 3:2-3. Thus, unlike Asherah, the Bible makes it very clear that there were many places of worship for YHWH spread throughout Israel and Judah right up to the time of Josiah, and possibly later, depending on the efficacy of his reform.

Dtr seem to have been torn between the traditions and everyday cultic practice, and their desire to see power centralised in Jerusalem. Their integration of the northern traditions, in particular into the pre-Temple narratives, enabled Dtr to expand their ideology to incorporate the wider area of Judahite conquest while legitimising it through the ancestral traditions of both Israel and Judah.<sup>55</sup> However, implementing this generated some complex problems. As has been noted above, this is demonstrated in Deuteronomy 12 in which Dtr have found it necessary to re-write the guidelines for sacrifice due to the increased distance for people to travel in order to procure fresh meat (Deut. 12:13-15).<sup>56</sup> In putting their legislations into effect, Dtr were undertaking a mammoth task. This is reflected

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<sup>54</sup> In the form of the *šem* theology.

<sup>55</sup> Israel Finkelstein, “Patriarchs, Exodus, Conquest: Fact or Fiction?,” in *The Quest for the Historical Israel*, edited by Brian B. Schmidt, (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007), 50-51; Brettler notes the typological treatment of stories such as that of Joseph in favour of Judahite primacy over Israel. Marc Zvi Brettler, *The Creation of History in Ancient Israel*, (London: Routledge, 1998), 55-61. He states that “at some point(s), an author or various authors who were interested in contemporary politics had a hand in the story’s transmission, and (re)formulated it so that it (also) became a typological tale, reflecting the interests of the Judean ruling class.” 59, original perentheses.

<sup>56</sup> Until this time the slaughter of *all* animals, whether for consumption or not, was considered to be a sacrificial act and therefore undertaken at a shrine or sanctuary. Given this fact alone, one can imagine that there would have been a small shrine in every town or village - the shrine belonging to Gideon’s father appears to have been very well known. To compensate for the loss of this facility Dtr attempted to change the mindset regarding sacrifice, and to cultivate one which distinguished between slaughter for food and slaughter for God. For example Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 124.

in evidence from sites such as Arad, which conformed to a proscription against cultic objects around the time of the late monarchy in Judah.<sup>57</sup>

Although archaeological evidence for *asherim* at *bāmôth* is scarce, many *bāmôth* contain unidentified ‘pits’ located next to *maššeboth* where another article would naturally stand,<sup>58</sup> but if these items were constructed from wood they would have disintegrated long ago. Many *bāmôth* contain *maššeboth* of different sizes in close proximity to one another, which could well be representations of the divine pair YHWH and Asherah.<sup>59</sup> Interestingly, John Day notes the correlation between *bāmâ* and *nāšab* when referring to high places and *maššeboth* and the erection of *asherim*. He argues that this is an indication of their constructed nature as opposed to a natural living tree. It could also reveal their position within a high place complementing a *maššeba*.<sup>60</sup>

There are a large number of passages in the biblical text that condemn the continued existence of shrines and high places. These include Deut. 12:2; 1 Kings 3:2, 15:14; 2 Kings 17:9, 21:3, 23:8; Jeremiah 19:5; Ezekiel 43:7 and Hosea 10:8. Such proscriptions are associated with Dtr’s evaluations of the kings of Judah. There is tentative evidence to suggest that these *bāmôth* were associated with a range of Canaanite deities, including

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<sup>57</sup> Christoph Uehlinger, “Was There a Cult Reform Under Josiah? The Case for a Well-Founded Minimum,” in *Good Kings and Bad Kings*, edited by Lester L. Grabbe, (London: T&T Clark, 2005), 292 n. 58. An analysis of the care with which the cultic objects from Arad were buried and preserved is undertaken by Herzog, “The Fortress Mound at Tel Arad,” 65-67. Herzog writes that “the careful burial of the symbolic objects expresses the desire or hope for a restoration of cultic activities in the future.” He goes on to note the significance that this restoration was not carried out, and that cultic reform at the time is the most probable explanation, 66.

<sup>58</sup> Zevit, *The Religions of Ancient Israel*, 256. This is also reflected in the finds from Tel Kitan as outlined by Emanuel Eisenberg, “Kitan, Tel,” in *The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land*, Volume 3, edited by Ephraim Stern, Ayelet Lewinson-Gilboa and Joseph Aviram, (Jerusalem: The Israel Exploration Society, 1993), 880.

<sup>59</sup> As is discussed by Zevit, *The Religions of Ancient Israel*, 257.

<sup>60</sup> John Day, *Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan*, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 52-54.

YHWH.<sup>61</sup> The biblical text and associated extra-biblical evidence give the impression that an integral feature of a *bāmâ* was the presence of an asherah.<sup>62</sup> This is not entirely the case. Only a limited number of sites with evidence that could be interpreted as an asherah have been discovered,<sup>63</sup> and thus it is difficult to discern whether all *bāmôth* contained an asherah. Some of these *bāmôth* could very well have been dedicated to other deities, as is intimated by the connection of ‘Baals’ and ‘asherahs’ in texts such as Judges 3:7 and 2 Chronicles 33:3.<sup>64</sup> That some of these at least were Yahwistic shrines is likely, as it has been fairly well established that YHWH and Asherah were considered a divine couple, and it follows that there would be some overlap in their worship practices.<sup>65</sup>

The biblical texts do not deny the legitimacy of *bāmôth* right up to the point when the Jerusalem Temple is built. For example, there is no Dtr polemic about shrines and high places in the passages relating to Samuel’s mother Hannah, when she goes to the high place at Shiloh for the annual festival and prays at the altar in front of the priest Eli (1 Sam. 1-2:11). There is also an apologetic in 1 Kings 3:2 in which the people are excused for having

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<sup>61</sup> There is an admission of this, of sorts, in 2 Kings 18:22. The use of *bāmôth* for the worship of other deities is briefly touched on in Zevit, *The Religions of Ancient Israel*, 565.

<sup>62</sup> For example the following passages which indicate that *asherim* were stationed near or next to altars: Deut. 16:21; Judges 6:25-30; 2 Kings 18:4, 23:15. If it were not for the evidence listed below for the remains of *asherim* at cultic sites this biblical coupling of altar and asherah could be easily dismissed as a polemical move to further discredit the institution of the *bāmôth*.

<sup>63</sup> Mettinger, *No Graven Image*, 151 n. 75 and the evidence from At Qatna for example. This is also supported by the evidence from Tel Kitan as outlined by Eisenberg, “Kitan, Tel,” 880.

<sup>64</sup> An altar of Baal is said to have an asherah in Judges 6:25, but this could easily be part of Dtr’s attempt to associate the goddess with Baal instead of YHWH as a polemical move.

<sup>65</sup> In *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah* Judith Hadley has dealt fairly comprehensively with the interplay between these forms of iconography and the common people’s perceptions of the deities, and there is no reason to undertake a repetition of such a thorough discussion in the present work. Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah*, in particular 71-72; Susan Ackerman, “Women and the Worship of Yahweh in Ancient Israel,” in *Confronting the Past: Archaeological and Historical Essays on Ancient Israel in Honor of William G. Dever*, edited by Seymour Gitin, J. Edward Wright and J.P. Dessel, (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 189-192. A different conclusion is suggested by Mastin, who sees the equation of YHWH and Asherah with one another as a form of “inclusive monotheism”, in which the symbol of the goddess has begun to take on a “gender-neutral” status and become associated with YHWH alone. B.A. Mastin, “Yahweh’s Asherah, Inclusive Monotheism and the Question of Dating,” in *In Search of Pre-Exilic Israel*, edited by John Day, (London: T&T Clark, 2004), 345-346.

sacrificed at the high places, for there was no other option for them. This is immediately preceded by a negative assessment of Solomon for doing the same in 1 Kings 3:3. Evidently there are no excuses for kings. There is a clear acknowledgement by Dtr of the pre-existence of *bāmôth* as present in the land and as part of the early Israelite cultus.<sup>66</sup> This is a different tactic for Dtr than the one taken regarding the elimination of the goddess, whom they were determined to excise from the cultural memory of the people from the beginning.<sup>67</sup>

### III.iv. *Bāmâ* as ‘Bank’

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Worship and sacrifice are not the only things that were centralised in Jerusalem when Dtr legislated against *bāmôth*. The function of the temple as ‘bank’ is also something that could by nature extend to other institutions of a similar type. While *bāmôth* are not necessarily temples, as there is a material difference between the two in structure alone if not also in function,<sup>68</sup> the economic underpinning of the day-to-day activities of *bāmôth* is

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<sup>66</sup> For example, Num. 33:52; Deut. 12:2-3; 1 Sam. 9:14-21. The earliest strata at Tel Arad have been dated to the 12<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE, designated XII, XIIA and XIIB by Aharoni, as outlined by Herzog, “The Fortress Mound at Tel Arad,” 14-17.

<sup>67</sup> And appear to have succeeded in doing so, as there are many instances in Chronicles where the Chronicler seems at a loss as to what to do with the references to Asherah which appear in the histories. These sections have proved to be a point of contention between scholars, and are one of the reasons why this thesis does not take Chronicles into account when considering the initial push for Dtr reform – the books of Chronicles are a *product* of Dtr ideology, and are not reflective of the initial drive for alteration of cultic practices. For example the discussion in Engle on the constant pluralisation of Asherah in Chronicles, “Pillar Figurines of Iron Age Israel and Asherah/Asherim,” (PhD diss., University of Pittsburgh, 1979), 63-71. This appears in 2 Chron. 14:2, 17:6, 19:3, 24:18, 31:1, 33:3, 33:19, 34:3-4, 34:7. Hadley also points to this misunderstanding on the part of the Chronicler regarding the identity of Asherah, especially as reflected in the account of 1 Kings 15:13 and 2 Chron. 15:16. Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah*, 64-66.

<sup>68</sup> Dever, “Were There Temples in Ancient Israel?,” 300-303. By his own reckoning Dever considers that there is evidence of only two temples currently extant in the archaeological remains of ancient Israel – the Jerusalem Temple and the temple at Arad, 303. If Dever were to be even more discerning and not take into consideration the biblical account of the Jerusalem Temple he might note that there is also no current and direct archaeological evidence confirming the existence of the Solomonic Temple at this particular time. Philip J. King and Lawrence E. Stager define temples as represented in the Bible as “an architectural structure intended for divine worship” but continue on to label these places of worship as *בית יהוה* or *היכל*, without once mentioning *במִת*, although they do mention shrines and sanctuaries and classify the Arad site as a temple. Philip J. King and Lawrence E. Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel*, (London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 330-338.

undetermined. Temples and *bāmôth* alike were places where sacrifices were made, priests served, and tithes were collected. Zevit states that “The temple was supported in the main by public donation and not by the royal purse... funds for this were raised from tithes and donations and the fees paid for services rendered (2 Kings 12:5-16, 17; 22:3-6).”<sup>69</sup> Ahlström suggests that economics may have played a large part in the initial reforms of Hezekiah, but that these reforms were not successful because the power of both the king and the deity were diminished due to forfeiture of administrative power.<sup>70</sup> Temples and *bāmôth* were centres of economic activity in any given region, typified by scribal record keeping and legal and financial documentation.<sup>71</sup> Dever characterises temples as places where a deity resides, but further clarifies this definition by citing the presence of the deity in the form of *maššeboth*.<sup>72</sup> *Bāmôth* also house *maššeboth*, the presence of which was a characteristic feature of such installations. Logically then, and by Dever’s own reasoning, *bāmôth* must also be classified as places where deities reside. Thus, they could be considered to serve the other cultic functions of a temple, including financial ones.

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<sup>69</sup> Zevit, *The Religions of Ancient Israel*, 661.

<sup>70</sup> Ahlström, *Royal Administration and National Religion in Ancient Palestine*, 65-68. Ahlström notes that “In order to efficiently stop the cult at the national sanctuaries and their economic importance the king had to eradicate [*sic*] their divine symbols, the *maššēbôt* and the *‘ăššêrim*. In this way he made it impossible to carry out further rituals as well as collecting tithes at these places.” 67.

<sup>71</sup> Karel van der Toorn, *Scribal Culture and the Making of the Hebrew Bible*, (London: Harvard University Press, 2007), 96-108. van der Toorn notes that a focus on scribal activity in ancient Israel “promoted the scribes to a prominent position. Through the doctrine of the Mosaic succession and the departure of the spirit of prophecy, the scribes claimed, in fact, a monopoly on religious instruction. Indeed it should not be overlooked that public instruction was crucial to the position and power of the Jewish scribes... Their power resided not so much in their possession of a secret as in their position as mediators and brokers of a body of knowledge that was, for all practical purposes, inaccessible to those not initiated into the arts of writing and interpretation.” 107-108.

<sup>72</sup> Dever, “Were There Temples in Ancient Israel?,” 311-313. Dever works from the evidence available from the Arad excavations in his discussion.

In the ancient world temples were major landholders and were engaged in the employment of large numbers of local residents in tending temple lands, flocks and crops.<sup>73</sup>

They also leased significant tracts of land to residents of the area in return for a portion of their produce as rent.<sup>74</sup> Temple income was therefore made up from the following:

- Tithes brought in by worshippers in the form of coinage and other valuable metals and jewellery, land, livestock and agricultural produce;
- Profit generated by the sale of excess livestock and crops from temple lands;
- Rent generated from the lease of temple lands;
- Interest generated from the loan of temple coinage, livestock or crops.<sup>75</sup>

It would follow logically that *bāmôth* income could have been generated by similar means. It is known that sacrifice and offerings were presented at these places,<sup>76</sup> and that

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<sup>73</sup> Such undertakings of temples in ancient Mesopotamia are detailed by Stevens who outlines the employees of the temple complex from priests to herdsmen and the archers who guard them, and the accountants, potters, stone masons and slaves. Marty E. Stevens, "Tithes and Taxes: The Economic Role of the Jerusalem Temple in its Ancient Near Eastern Context," (PhD diss., Union Theological Seminary and Presbyterian School of Christian Education, 2002), 22-49. Some of these were employees on a form of contract known as a prebend, while others were paid a ration out of temple stock, 47-48; Joy McCorriston, *Pilgrimage and Household in the Ancient Near East*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 144. McCorriston states that "The significance of temples in Babylonia... has led to considerable discussion of the role of temple not only in social and ritual life but as the artery of early urban economics." Also Gregory C. Chirichigno, *Debt Slavery in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 44; Johannes Renger, "Interaction of Temple, Palace, and 'Private Enterprise' in the Old Babylonian Economy," in *State and Temple Economy in the Ancient Near East*, 252-256.

<sup>74</sup> Stevens, *Temples, Tithes and Taxes*, 90-91; Chirichigno, *Debt Slavery in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, 44.

<sup>75</sup> Stevens, *Temples, Tithes and Taxes*, 82-120. Stevens classifies Temple income in a slightly different way to the method employed here. She includes gifts, taxes and trade as major categories, while rent and sales of produce and stock are included within her land classification. This is also reflected in the assessment of Morris Silver, *Prophets and Markets: The Political Economy of Ancient Israel*, (Boston: Kluwer-Nijhoff, 1983), 67-68, 78, n.8.

<sup>76</sup> Stevens states that "A temple likely had storage facilities related to cultic offerings and a local bureaucracy to administer cultic rites. By contrast an altar was located outside as a place of sacrifice. Every temple had an altar, but not every altar was located near a temple. Gradations of holiness, therefore, accompanied altars at temples, free-standing altars, and altars at 'high places,' which also had cultic accoutrements such as pillars and sacred trees." Stevens, "Tithes and Taxes," 144.

large-scale rituals were often conducted there.<sup>77</sup> The livestock and produce for the ongoing cultic function of *bāmôth* and the maintenance of the priesthood that served there needed to rest on secure economic structures, without depending solely on the piety or goodwill of the people of the surrounding area. Furthermore, temples and other cultic installations played a vital role in the economic life of the area, functioning as major employers.<sup>78</sup> If the area was not ‘serviced’ by a temple but by a *bāmâ* instead, the *bāmâ* would function in the same social and economic way as the temple would have done in its place. By extension, then, it is legitimate to conclude that *bāmôth* served precisely the same material functions in the surrounding area as a temple would have, that they were landholders and landlords, and that they functioned as a form of banking institution.

As lenders of money and other forms of movable capital such as agricultural produce, temples were able to charge interest rates. While the biblical text specifically forbids the charging of interest rates to other Israelites (Ex. 22:25; Lev. 25:36-37; Deut. 23:20-21), one has to wonder if this, like the alteration of the nature of slaughter, was a placebo or political countermeasure to make the loss of the local ‘bank’ appear in a more favourable light, or if, like the alterations to the sacrificial and judicial systems, it was

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<sup>77</sup> As is demonstrated by the remains of grains and animal fat and bones in the remains of these sites as well as large vessels for the long-term storage of the less immediately perishable of these, such as those found in early stratum at Arad and Tel Dan, Eli Yannai, “The Origin and Distribution of the Collared-Rim Pithos and Krater: A Case of Conservative Pottery Production in the Ancient Near East from the Fourth to the First Millennium,” in A.M. Maeir and P. de Miroschedji, *“I Will Speak the Riddle of Ancient Times.” Archaeological and Historical Studies in Honor of Amihai Mazar on the Occasion of His Sixtieth Birthday*, (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 90-92.

<sup>78</sup> Orlin, *Life and Thought in the Ancient Near East*, 72-79. Although Orlin is discussing Assyrian evidence, lack of similar data from early Israel, coupled with the many similarities which have been identified between that area and the surrounding nations, leads to a natural comparison in economic matters as well. He states that “temple and palace were from the earliest times landlords, employers, and store-keepers in the ancient Mesopotamian city.” 73. Na’aman also notes the rebuilding efforts of king Mesha which revitalised the cult of Chemosh while providing “an income to the new temple and its priests”, Nadav Na’aman, “Royal Inscription versus Prophetic Story: Mesha’s Rebellion According to Biblical and Moabite Historiography,” in *Ahab Agonistes: The Rise and Fall of the Omri Dynasty*, edited by Lester L. Grabbe, (London: T&T Clark, 2007), 175.

somehow necessary for the restructure of the cultus. Sweeney has noted that such a move may have functioned as a gesture to the Levites who were displaced by the centralisation, as recompense for the loss of revenue that they would have faced.<sup>79</sup> The average national interest rate in the ANE around 600 BCE was roughly twenty percent,<sup>80</sup> although like interest rates throughout history this had the tendency to fluctuate and depended on various factors such as inflation, the prices of goods and services, commercial monopolies, and climatic effects on agriculture. Over the hundred years leading up to the end of the exile, the interest rate in Babylon had been driven up to fifty percent by the extremely wealthy Murašu family.<sup>81</sup> It is also conceivable that the elimination of local official financial institutions had the effect of driving customers into the potentially unscrupulous ‘arms’ of private lending families such as the Murašus. The legislation regarding interest rates documented in the Bible may have been forwarded as a measure against such exploitative activities – a prudent move, as the long term activities of the Murašus virtually bankrupted Babylon, leading to economic turmoil, which weakened the nation leaving it open to invasion by the Persian army.<sup>82</sup> Such checks and balances were rare in the ancient world, but just as necessary then as they are today, and no doubt were subject to the same amount of resistance.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Marvin A. Sweeney, *King Josiah of Judah: The Lost Messiah of Israel*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 152-153; Mark Leuchter, “‘The Levite in Your Gates’: The Deuteronomic Redefinition of Levitical Authority,” *JBL* 126.3 (2007), 418-419.

<sup>80</sup> Stevens, *Temples, Tithes and Taxes*, in particular 151-154; Knight, *Law, Power, and Justice in Ancient Israel*, 237-238.

<sup>81</sup> Stevens, *Temples, Tithes and Taxes*, 158-159.

<sup>82</sup> Stevens, *Temples, Tithes and Taxes*, 158-159. Stevens states that “in the long term, this arrangement of land management weakened the wider economy by concentrating the incentive for agricultural efficiencies in the hands of a few and by determining land use based primarily on economic factors.” 159.

<sup>83</sup> As outlined by Witold J. Henisz and Bennet A. Zelner, “Resistance to Multilateral Influence on Reform: The Political Backlash against Private Infrastructure Investments,” *Policy Research Working Paper 3690*, (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 2005), 16-17.

In the same way as temples had to support their cultic functions financially, so too did *bāmôth*. In order to meet these needs they must have owned lands, grown crops, run both bovine and ovine herds, employed people to till fields and shepherd sheep and goats. In the event that a *bāmâ* and its clergy owned land, such land would have had to be leased out to tenant farmers. The *bāmâ* would also have had to store excess grain and sell excess livestock, although this would have been on a smaller scale than that of temples proper. Revenue could have thus been generated and excess loaned out at interest, as detailed in the Wilbur Papyrus.<sup>84</sup> Support industries would naturally have sprung up around such institutions, weaving cloth for priestly robes or making pottery for use during rituals. Leather workers would have preserved the skins of sacrificial animals and bakers provided bread to the cattle farmers. These workmen would then have been paid out of temple or *bāmâ* income. Janssen outlines the way in which this would have been distributed throughout the community using an example from Egypt during the reign of Ramesses III.<sup>85</sup> The entire economic lifeblood of a community could flow from a temple complex. It is no wonder that legislating against these institutions involved a complete restructure of sacrificial, civil and financial law.

### **III.v. Did the Jerusalem Temple Own Lands?**

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The question regarding land ownership by the Jerusalem temple is a complex one. Studies over the past several decades have provided a wealth of evidence that details the

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<sup>84</sup> As outlined in Janssen, "The Role of the Temple," 510-511. Janssen states that "some domains were exploited directly by the temples, while others consisted of tenures from which a percentage of the yield was delivered to the temple store-houses." 510.

<sup>85</sup> Janssen, "The Role of the Temple," 511-515.

economic workings of temples in the ANE.<sup>86</sup> Such evidence for the Jerusalem Temple, or any other temples or shrines throughout Israel is, by comparison, virtually non-existent.<sup>87</sup> Dever has proposed two sites which can be considered temples proper in ancient Israel: the Temple in Jerusalem and the temple complex at Arad.<sup>88</sup> Such a lack of major temple complexes, if true to the historical situation in ancient Israel, increases the importance of *bāmôth* and their role within the community.

Stevens has noted the bureaucratic nature of temples and the connection between such bureaucracy, power and wealth. She states that “In ancient societies the primary form of wealth was land and its productive use.”<sup>89</sup> An example of such use is outlined by Renger, who notes that temples played a vital role in local economies through the rent of land to people for their subsistence, and also by promoting employment for temple personnel, craftsmen, and providing a service of charity to the needy.<sup>90</sup> Such connections are common in the societies of the surrounding nations and it can be extrapolated that these would also be reflected in the lives of the ancient Israelites.<sup>91</sup> Furthermore, Bietak has noted the possible use of many cultic installations as *bêt marzeah*. Such places were associated with

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<sup>86</sup> As contained in volumes such as Lipiński, *State and Temple Economy in the Ancient Near East*; I.M. Diakonoff, *Ancient Mesopotamia*, (Moscow: ‘Nauka’ Publishing house, 1969); Rollinger and Ulf, *Commerce and Monetary Systems in the Ancient World*; and in individual articles such as J. Makkay, “The Origins of the ‘Temple-Economy’ as Seen in the Light of Prehistoric Evidence,” *Iraq* 45.1 (1983), 1-6; Roland Boer, “The Sacred Economy of Ancient ‘Israel’,” *SJOT* 21.1 (2007), 29-48; Stevens, *Temples, Tithes and Taxes*, 85-93. Stevens states that “Perhaps the greatest source of temple income in Mesopotamia was landownership.” 85.

<sup>87</sup> Dever refers to such evidence as “very rare”, *The Lives of Ordinary People in Ancient Israel*, 226.

<sup>88</sup> Dever, *The Lives of Ordinary People in Ancient Israel*, 260-262.

<sup>89</sup> Stevens, *Temples, Tithes and Taxes*, 82.

<sup>90</sup> Renger, “Interaction of Temple, Palace, and ‘Private Enterprise’ in the Old Babylonian Economy,” 252-254.

<sup>91</sup> Snell includes a short assessment of the power of the temple of Amun in his analysis of the reforms of Akhenaten, noting the activities of the temple and that the temple “employed more people than the king himself.” Daniel C. Snell, *Religions of the Ancient Near East*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 74. A negative assessment of the charitable works of temples is provided by Chirichigno, *Debt-Slavery in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, 40-41. Chirichigno notes that temples could coerce the poor into working for them in return for aid.

funerary meals and rites, and were institutions which owned properties that provided for the upkeep and income of the institution.<sup>92</sup>

In light of the absence of material evidence for the ownership of land by the Jerusalem Temple, it is necessary to draw on comparative data from other parts of the ANE.<sup>93</sup> Other Mesopotamian sites, such as the Eanna temple in Uruk, have been found with archives of tablets detailing the economic workings of that institution and the surrounding region.<sup>94</sup> The tablets record such transactions as loans, interest, donations and leases,<sup>95</sup> indicating that these temples engaged in a full range of economic matters within the community. Renger notes that:

The economic role of the temple within the network of Old Babylonian society is, however, not only determined by activities whose aim was to care for and feed the gods... Apart from these activities which included, of course, the support of the temple staff, cultic as well as managerial, the temple played a very important role in a field which we would term nowadays as charity.<sup>96</sup>

The only comparable Israelite archive to date is the Samaria ostraca, which provide an interesting, yet not altogether clear, picture of the economic workings of that region in the 8<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Due to the nature of the language utilised in the Hebrew text on the ostraca

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<sup>92</sup> Bietak states that "From what we know from these sources, the *marzeah* was an organization, the members of which congregated for ritual feasting and drinking, sometimes to excess. The *marzeah* was an institution that owned property: besides the *bêt marzeah* and its furnishings, it also owned fields, vineyards, and other properties, the revenue from which sustained the institution." Manfred Bietak, "Temple or 'Bêt Marzeah'?", in *Symbiosis, Symbolism, and the Power of the Past. Canaan, Ancient Israel, and Their Neighbors from the Late Bronze Age Through Roman Palaestina*, edited by W.G. Dever and S. Gitin, (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2003), 165-166.

<sup>93</sup> For example, the analysis by Marc Van De Mieroop regarding the importance of foregoing an overarching theory of ancient economies in favour of more localised hypotheses. Marc Van De Mieroop, "Economic Theories and the Ancient Near East," in *Commerce and Monetary Systems in the Ancient World*, 54-62.

<sup>94</sup> As outlined in Stevens, *Temples, Tithes and Taxes*, 86; Grant Frame, "A Neo-Babylonian Tablet with an Aramaic Docket and the Surety Phrase *pūt šēp(i)... našû*," in *The World of the Aramaeans, Volume 3: Studies in Language and Literature in Honour of Paul-Eugene Dion*, edited by P.M. Michèle Daviau, John W. Wevers and Michael Weigel, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 127-129. Frame states that "The Eanna temple played an important role in the economic life of Uruk and frequently made loans to individuals from its resources or was owed agricultural produce or money by tenants and dependents." 127.

<sup>95</sup> Stevens, *Temples, Tithes and Taxes*, 85-91.

<sup>96</sup> Renger, "Interaction of Temple, Palace, and 'Private Enterprise'," 254.

their exact purpose is unclear,<sup>97</sup> although it is evident that they were in some way administrative and pertain to financial matters.<sup>98</sup> While the ostraca are considered to pertain to palace archives rather than temple ones, they demonstrate that the accumulation of wealth by the palace was common in ancient Israel.<sup>99</sup> It is logical to infer that the Temple would also accumulate wealth.<sup>100</sup>

A further mixed message is obtained from the biblical texts, some of which imply the donation of lands to the Temple, or the confiscation of lands by the Temple complex for transgressions (Lev. 27:14-24; Num. 5:8-10, 35:1-8).<sup>101</sup> There are also texts which discuss the redemption of such lands – a provision that would seem to be contradictory to the land-accumulation hypothesis.<sup>102</sup> Stevens notes that the animals used in cultic ritual, often in great numbers, must have been acquired and then housed somewhere.<sup>103</sup> Such ventures require land. A clinching point may be found in the few biblical texts which mention the

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<sup>97</sup> Dever, *The Lives of Ordinary People in Ancient Israel*, 226-227. Nam states of the Samaria and Arad ostraca archives that “these collections have limited data, as they represent immaterial quantities compared with the total economic activity. Both the Samaria and Arad archives barely number one hundred, a paltry figure compared with the many thousands of extant economic texts of the bronze age.” R.S. Nam, *Portrayals of Economic Exchange in the Book of Kings*, (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 21; Scott B. Noegel, “The Samaria Ostraca,” in *The Ancient Near East: Historical Sources in Translation*, (London: Blackwell, 2006), 397. The problem lies in the function of the *lamed* as a prefix in Hebrew. It can mean either ‘to’ or ‘from’, thus making interpretation difficult.

<sup>98</sup> Niemann notes that it has been uncommon to associate the ostraca with taxes, the logic behind which decision he disagrees with, although he admits that in this case the conclusion is most likely correct. They are not tax documents, but are more likely the records of inter-clan transactions. Hermann Niemann, “A New Look at the Samaria Ostraca: The King-Clan Relationship,” *Tel Aviv* 35 (2008), 251-252.

<sup>99</sup> Dever, *The Lives of Ordinary People in Ancient Israel*, 238.

<sup>100</sup> Renger equates the economic workings of palace and temple with one another. He considers the primary difference between the two ‘estates’ to have been the community engagement of the temple complex, while the palace was considerably more insular. Renger, “Interaction of Temple, Palace, and ‘Private Enterprise’,” 249-256.

<sup>101</sup> Stevens, *Temples, Tithes and Taxes*, 83; Nam notes that “The Jerusalem temple stands in the tradition of ancient Near Eastern temple economies. They certainly collected consumable foods and received tribute.” Nam, *Portrayals of Economic Exchange in the Book of Kings*, 141. Nam also assesses the redistribution involved in the centralisation efforts of Josiah compared to those of Joash, which are given a comparatively positive spin by Dtr. “This centralisation policy goes directly to support the temple of YHWH.” 143.

<sup>102</sup> Such pros and cons are detailed in Stevens, *Temples, Tithes and Taxes*, 82-85. Nam notes the apparent difficulties posed to redistribution of lands in the form of the inalienability of land in ancient Israel. Nam, *Portrayals of Economic Exchange in the Book of Kings*, 143-145.

<sup>103</sup> Stevens, *Temples, Tithes and Taxes*, 83-84.

measures used to weigh currency in the sanctuary.<sup>104</sup> This is an indication that monetary transactions happened frequently enough in such institutions to occasion a linguistic convention applied to the standard used there. Clearly then, temples and sanctuaries in ancient Israel functioned as strategic financial institutions, perhaps even as regulating bodies. This is further indicated by the regulations placed on interest rates by Dtr in Deuteronomy 23:20-21. Such institutions, by their very nature as powerful and wealthy forces within the community, owned land. Moreover, their eventual closure unsurprisingly paved the way for the Jerusalem Temple to be set up as arguably the main financial and landholding institution in Judah.

### III.vi. *Maṣṣebot*

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*Maṣṣebot* are large standing stones typically located around the perimeter of cultic sites (such as *bāmôth*), usually within the temenos wall behind or to the side of the altar,<sup>105</sup> and are thought to have occasionally been accompanied by an asherah.<sup>106</sup> They usually stand between eighty and one hundred and fifty centimetres high, and are occasionally inscribed.<sup>107</sup> Elizabeth Bloch-Smith provides the following definition:

A *massebah* is neither structural nor functional; it is prominent or conspicuous, focusing the viewer's attention on a particular spot; its shape is recognizably a

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<sup>104</sup> As outlined briefly in Dever, *The Lives of Ordinary People in Ancient Israel*, 244-245. The JPS translates בִּשְׁקָל הַקֹּדֶשׁ as "the sanctuary weight" or "by the sanctuary weight".

<sup>105</sup> Zevit, *The Religions of Ancient Israel*, 256. Zevit observes that the identification of these stones with Hebrew *maṣṣebot* is certain because some of the stones are labelled as such, 257. This is also observed by Richard Hess, *Israelite Religions. An Archaeological and Biblical Survey*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 199.

<sup>106</sup> This notion is supported solely by the biblical texts. Although references to Asherah have been discovered at several archaeological sites, no actual asherah has been found to date (with the exception of Mettinger, *No Graven Image*, 33, where he identifies a tree trunk alongside a *maṣṣeba* as an asherah). As has previously been mentioned, this is likely due to the material from which they were constructed. Deut. 16:21-22 is an example of Dtr condemning the joint erection of *maṣṣeba* and asherah.

<sup>107</sup> Zevit, *The Religions of Ancient Israel*, 256.

standing stone rather than a random rock; and the context and accompanying assemblage support the identification.<sup>108</sup>

Many biblical texts refer to the erection of *maššeboth*, which has led scholars to conclude that they were representative of YHWH or marked a place that was sacred to him. These standing stones are recorded in the Bible as having been erected by various patriarchs, most notably Jacob, after his famous dream which gave rise to the establishment of the sanctuary at Bethel (Gen. 28:10-22, which includes a reference to tithing in v.22), but also in texts such as Joshua 4:1-24 in which the notion of standing stones as legitimate practice in the early cult is reinforced. From this evidence alone it is clear that *maššeboth* were a legitimate element of Israelite cultic life, even without the large number of them that have been uncovered during archaeological excavations.<sup>109</sup> Deuteronomy condemns the practice of erecting *maššeboth*, although the motives for this are unclear. Bloch-Smith notes that there could have been a transference of function between idols proper and *maššeboth* which was objectionable to Dtr.<sup>110</sup> Akin to their treatment of *bāmôth*, *maššeboth* were not a concern in ancient Israel until Dtr's drive towards a centralised sanctuary. Joshua 4:1-24 details the erection of twelve *maššeboth* by the people upon entering the land, which is an indication of the acknowledgement by Dtr of the legitimacy of the practice in the pre-Temple cultus, while Deut. 16:22 condemns them, indicating that Dtr no longer find them acceptable in their Temple-centric world. It is unknown whether or not a *maššebe* stood in the Jerusalem

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<sup>108</sup> Bloch-Smith, "Would the Real *Massebot* Please Stand Up. Cases of Real and Mistakenly Identified Standing Stones in Ancient Israel," in *Text, Artifact and Image. Revealing Ancient Israelite Religion*, edited by Gary Beckman and Theodore J. Lewis, (Providence, Rhode Island: Brown Judaic Studies, 2006), 65.

<sup>109</sup> Elizabeth Bloch-Smith provides an analysis of many extant *maššeboth*, and notes the lack of uniformity of size and shape in *maššeboth* which can present a problem for their correct identification. Many stones which have previously been identified as *maššeboth* have since been reclassified as architectural or structural features. Bloch-Smith, "Would the Real *Massebot* Please Stand Up," 64-79. Also Zevit, who feels that many of these finds do not hold up under closer scrutiny, *The Religions of Ancient Israel*, 256, n. 215. Whether or not this is the case is not of concern for this thesis. It is enough that these stones are extant in the archaeological record in Israel at all. When considered in conjunction with the biblical evidence, the conclusion is a solid one.

<sup>110</sup> Bloch-Smith, "Would the Real *Massebot* Please Stand Up," 65.

Temple at any stage, although Hess associates the pillars in the Temple with *maššeboth*.<sup>111</sup> It could very well be their association with un-centralised *bāmôth* that present a problem for Dtr.<sup>112</sup>

Working with the Biblical texts as evidence, it is likely that cultic centres (*bāmôth*) were often established around *maššeboth*.<sup>113</sup> The establishment of the centre at Bethel by Jacob for instance (Gen. 35:13-15), reflects this practice. Once a *maššeba* was erected at a site of significance such as that of a theophany, people would know to return there.<sup>114</sup> The allure of the site could have grown, and this was likely to have an exponential effect on its development. Such a progression from *maššeboth* as a commemorative marker to *bāmôth* to temple proper is described by Mettinger. In these cases the original *maššeba* is maintained as the initial point of theophany.<sup>115</sup> The competition produced by a plethora of such sites means that only some would have achieved the status of a large shrine, but for those that did the final result was a major, widely recognised establishment with a permanent staff of priests and other labourers. Logically, a shrine of this size would have the capacity to acquire land via tithes and as payment for debt, and eventually begin to function as a fully fledged financial institution as has been discussed above. It would have generated a bureaucracy of its own.

The finds from Arad suggest that *maššeboth* were a common element in the cultic life of Judah at least until the 8<sup>th</sup> century BCE. The finds from stratum IX include a large altar

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<sup>111</sup> Hess, *Israelite Religions*, 206.

<sup>112</sup> An intimation of this can be found in Zevit, *The Religions of Ancient Israel*, who gives a brief assessment of the link between *maššeboth* and *bāmôth* in the ideology of Dtr, 194-195.

<sup>113</sup> Mettinger observes that “the memorial function [of *maššeboth*] may easily develop into a cultic one.” *No Graven Image*, 32.

<sup>114</sup> Zevit relates the presence of *maššeboth* with open air sanctuaries. *The Religions of Ancient Israel*, 256.

<sup>115</sup> Mettinger, *No Graven Image*, 32. He cites the evidence from Eilat as an example of this, 32-33.

stone and another slab which looks as if it once stood upright. Both of these items have been laid down and plastered over in a manner suggesting care, and possible preservation for recovery at a later date.<sup>116</sup> This may well indicate that the caretakers of this site considered the burial to be temporary.<sup>117</sup> Herzog states that “the careful burial of the symbolic objects expresses the desire or hope for a restoration of cultic activities in the future.”<sup>118</sup> He notes the cultic significance of both the cancellation of the site, and also of the fact that it was never recommissioned. Amihai Mazar has interpreted two of the *maššeboth* found at the site as possible representations of YHWH and Asherah, although this is a tentative assessment.<sup>119</sup>

Tel Dan is another large cult centre at which *maššeboth* have been uncovered, which Zevit dates to the 9<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE.<sup>120</sup> The installation is an Israelite one, and several sets of five *maššeboth* have been uncovered there. So common are *maššeboth* within the Tel Dan complex that Zevit has used the evidence to further define the term *bāmâ*. He states that “These terms referred to cult places containing *massebot*, both in the open, like the ones outside the wall, and enclosed, like the ones within the gate chamber. These places were accessible to all and their sacral objects were generally approachable by all.”<sup>121</sup>

That *maššeboth* could represent both male and female deities is also suggested by Keel and Uehlinger.<sup>122</sup> This position is supported by Zevit’s observation that some *maššeboth* appear to be placed in such a way as to pair a tall thin stone with a short plump

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<sup>116</sup> Herzog, “The Fortress Mound at Tel Arad,” 65-67.

<sup>117</sup> Zevit, *The Religions of Ancient Israel*, 167-171.

<sup>118</sup> Herzog, “The Fortress Mound at Tel Arad,” 66.

<sup>119</sup> Amihai Mazar, “The Divided Monarchy: Comments on Some Archaeological Issues,” in *The Quest for the Historical Israel*, 176.

<sup>120</sup> Zevit, *The Religions of Ancient Israel*, 193.

<sup>121</sup> Zevit, *The Religions of Ancient Israel*, 195.

<sup>122</sup> Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses and Images of God*, 33.

one, representing a male and female pair of deities.<sup>123</sup> In light of the previous discussion, it is likely that *maššeboth* represent the immanence of a deity in a particular site. According to Zevit, “Phenomenologically they were either symbols evoking a presence, or objects engorged by the power of the presence, and hence for all practical purposes en-theosed in some way.”<sup>124</sup> While Zevit argues that such a use of non-anthropomorphic symbolism is an example of Mettinger’s de-facto aniconism,<sup>125</sup> Hess disagrees with this association.<sup>126</sup> These stones were a physical embodiment of the deity *in some form*, and therefore should not be classified as aniconistic in the same way as the presence of an empty throne, upon which the deity is seated, can be.<sup>127</sup>

Deut. 16:21 contains a blanket condemnation of both male and female cultic objects – *asherim* and *maššeboth*. The erection of *asherim* in the biblical texts is always considered with disdain, and portrayed as a non-Yahwistic action.<sup>128</sup> However, the same cannot be said for the erection of *maššeboth*. Aside from their close association with ‘external’ sanctuaries, there is no conceivable reason why Dtr would take exception to these stones. While it could be argued that their semi-iconistic nature<sup>129</sup> led Dtr to object to them on religious grounds, a holistic view of the situation of reform with its strong focus on centralisation leads more fluidly to the conclusion that *maššeboth*, like *bāmôth* and *asherim*, were victims of Dtr’s

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<sup>123</sup> Zevit, *The Religions of Ancient Israel*, 257.

<sup>124</sup> Zevit, *The Religions of Ancient Israel*, 257. He further argues that the destruction of *maššeboth* erected for other deities was proscribed in Israel “because they guaranteed the presence of the gods who indwelt them even after those who had set them up were gone.” 261.

<sup>125</sup> For example Zevit’s definition of aniconism in *The Religions of Ancient Israel*, 335-336. This association does indeed fit with Mettinger’s definition as asserted by him in *No Graven Image*, 37.

<sup>126</sup> Hess, *Israelite Religions*, 198.

<sup>127</sup> As is indicated by Hurowitz, who considers *maššeboth* in the terms of Mettinger’s ‘material aniconism’ classification as opposed to his ‘empty space aniconism’. Victor Hurowitz, “Picturing Imageless Deities. Iconography in the Ancient Near East”, *BAR* 23.3 (May/June, 1997), 47-48; Hess, *Israelite Religions*, 198.

<sup>128</sup> Many biblical characters are accused of having erected an *asherah*, to the chagrin of the Lord. The most notable of these are Maacah in 1 Kings 15:3 and Manasseh in 2 Kings 7. The nature of these *asherim* and the *אֲשֵׁרִים* thereof will be discussed further in chapter 6.

<sup>129</sup> *Contra* Mettinger, *No Graven Image*, 36.

desire to consolidate bureaucracy in Jerusalem, by ensuring that no prospect of external competition would have means to resurface. That *maššeboth* were deeply embedded in the history and practice of Israelite cultic life and then quickly cut out, points to the thorough nature of the Dtr reform.<sup>130</sup>

### III.vii. Bull Statuary and Iconography

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Tauromorph imagery, or representations of a deity in the shape of a bull or calf, is attested in relation to YHWH both within and outside of the biblical texts. These attestations are limited however; only two biblical texts refer to YHWH directly as represented by a golden calf (Exodus 32 and 1 Kings 12:28-31), and only a handful of extra-biblical material has been uncovered from what are often considered to have been Yahwistic shrines. These shrines include the Bull Site near Dothan, and Ashkelon.<sup>131</sup>

The symbol of the Canaanite god El was the bull, or calf.<sup>132</sup> If it is to be considered that YHWH and El are the same deity (or one the syncretistic form of the other),<sup>133</sup> it follows that their iconography would also be ‘transferable’. The biblical texts indicate that tauromorph iconography was indeed a part of official Yahwism. The primary text attesting to this is the condemnatory one outlining ‘Jeroboam’s sin’, in setting up bull or calf statues

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<sup>130</sup> As is demonstrated by the finds at Arad. Mettinger, *No Graven Image*, 145. Herzog notes the careful burial of the *maššeboth* and other cultic objects at the Arad site, indicating that there may have been anticipation for a restoration of this site at a later date. “The Fortress Mound at Tel Arad”, 66. This is echoed by Uehlinger, “Was there a Cult Reform Under King Josiah?,” 290-291.

<sup>131</sup> The calf discovered at Ashkelon dates to an early time of settlement, before the Philistines occupied the area. Hess, *Israelite Religions*, 157.

<sup>132</sup> N. Wyatt, “Calf,” in *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, edited by Karel van der Toorn, Bob Becking and Pieter W. van der Horst, (New York: E.J. Brill, 1995), 347, and “Of Calves and Kings: The Canaanite Dimension in the Religion of Israel,” *SJOT* 6.1 (1992), 81-82. Wyatt argues that the calves of Jeroboam were specifically designated as bull of El for the purpose of detracting from the southern cult of YHWH. This perspective is one of syncretism.

<sup>133</sup> As is argued in Day, *Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan*, 13-41.

in the two northern sanctuaries, dedicated specifically to YHWH (1 Kings 12:28-31). That this was a legitimate cultic action on Jeroboam's part is almost certain, as it is unlikely that Jeroboam was interested in cultic reform.<sup>134</sup> In this vein Olyan argues that:

All this is hardly possible in light of Jeroboam's weak position as a new king with a nascent kingdom to secure. The last thing such a king would do is innovate in the cult, and the invention of a new religion is inconceivable. Jeroboam's real 'crime' was his establishment of two rival sanctuaries dedicated to Yahweh in order to draw northern pilgrims away from Jerusalem so that he could secure the independence of the north.<sup>135</sup>

Jeroboam's sin was, rather than apostasy, cult adherence and *decentralisation*.<sup>136</sup> When his situation is compared with that of Hezekiah or Josiah, it becomes clear that they were in much stronger political positions where they were assured of the loyalty of their kingdoms. In the time of Josiah, the northern kingdom was in decline along with the Assyrian Empire. The Judahite bureaucracy was in a much stronger position for cultic alteration. According to this reckoning, it becomes much more likely that Hezekiah or Josiah were the innovators than Jeroboam. This is echoed by Day, who notes the way in which the reign of Jeroboam reflects the official and traditional cult of YHWH, as opposed to that of the reforming kings Hezekiah and Josiah.<sup>137</sup> This is especially true of the basis in the tradition for Jeroboam's

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<sup>134</sup> Hutton concludes that "the Bethel cult established by Jeroboam was securely within the pale of Yahwism, the Deuteronomistic description of Jeroboam's cultic implements as 'calves' may betray the rhetorical belittling of those images underlying the Judahite authors' patent disapproval of the cults' establishment." Jeremy M. Hutton, "Southern, Northern and Transjordanian Perspectives," in *Religious Diversity in Ancient Israel and Judah*, 160.

<sup>135</sup> Saul M. Olyan, *Asherah and the Cult of Yahweh in Israel*, (Atlanta: Scholar's Press, 1988), 11. This sentiment is shared by F.M. Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1973), who states that "it appears that Jeroboam did not invent a new cultus, but, choosing the famous sanctuary of 'El at Bethel, attempted to archaize even more radically than the astute David had done when he brought tent and ark and the cherubim iconography to Jerusalem, transferring the nimbus of the old league sanctuary at Shiloh to Zion." 74.

<sup>136</sup> *Decentralisation* may not be an accurate representation of the situation in this case, as the north-south split of the kingdom and Jeroboam's establishment of shrines in the north are represented in the biblical text from a position of hindsight.

<sup>137</sup> Day, *Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan*, 36-41.

golden calves.<sup>138</sup> Indeed, Cross asserts that Jeroboam attempted to strengthen his position through the establishment of two shrines and the appointment of priests from both Levitical and Aaronid stock.<sup>139</sup> Thus it is possible to conclude that whether the cult of YHWH was syncretistic with that of El, or whether a logical extension of that cult with the deity developing to be known by an alternate name, it is clear that *at some stage at least* YHWH was understood to have been represented by bull or calf iconography.<sup>140</sup> How far this association extends back through time is uncertain, although the story of Aaron erecting the calf in the Sinai in Ex. 32:1-8 would indicate that the practice had its roots in antiquity.<sup>141</sup> How far this cultic practice extends forward in time is also an unknown, although the

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<sup>138</sup> Day, *Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan*, 36. Day states that: "Although not all agree, most scholars now accept that Jeroboam's calves were associated with Yahweh, the God of Israel, rather than some foreign god. Thus, first, Jeroboam was attempting to secure his throne and stop people from going to worship Yahweh in Jerusalem (1 Kgs 12.26-27), and would therefore have been unwise at that point to have imposed some alien god. Secondly, Jeroboam declares of the calves, 'Behold your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt' (cf. Exod. 32.4). It is Yahweh who is elsewhere the god of the Exodus, and there is no evidence that this deliverance was ever attributed to any other god. Thirdly, Exodus 32, which is clearly polemicizing against Jeroboam's calves, goes on to connect them with Yahweh in Exod. 32.5, 'Tomorrow shall be a feast to the Lord' (cf. the reference to the feast in 1 Kgs 12.32). Fourthly, Jeroboam's son, Abijah (1 Kgs 14.1) has a Yahwistic name. Fifthly, the one personal name from Israel referring to a bull is 'glyw, 'calf of Yahweh' (or possibly 'Yahweh is a calf') on Samaria ostrakon 41 (about 100 or 150 years later than Jeroboam I), thus associating the calf with Yahweh rather than any other god. Sixthly, the fact that the golden calves were not removed in Jehu's purge suggests that they were perceived to be Yahwistic." According to Cross, "It is inconceivable that the national cult of Jeroboam was other than Yahwistic." *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, 74.

<sup>139</sup> Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, 198-199.

<sup>140</sup> Zevit considers these images as legitimate for the northern kingdom at least. He is of the opinion that the Ex. 32 narrative is a "veiled" polemic against this iconography. Zevit, *The Religions of Ancient Israel*, 317, and n.120. That there is a difference between bulls and calves in the cultic realm is explored by Daniel E. Fleming, "If El is a Bull, Who is a Calf? Reflections on Religion in Second-Millennium Syria-Palestine," *Eretz-Israel* 26 (1999), 23-27. This distinction could make a difference to whether YHWH is associated with El or with Baal, and thus also with his association with Asherah. Hutton argues that the description in the Bible of the images as calves was an intentional attempt by Dtr to belittle Jeroboam's establishment, Hutton, "Southern, Northern and Transjordanian Perspectives," 159-160.

<sup>141</sup> Day, *Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan*, 34. That the confession "these are your gods" in Ex. 32:4 and 1 Kings 12:28 has its origin in antiquity is outlined in Knoppers, *Two Nations Under God*, Volume 2, 26-27. Knoppers also advocates a plural translation for אלהים in both texts, as opposed to Yahwistic statements found elsewhere throughout the Bible – "Hence, whatever sources the Deuteronomist may have had at his disposal, he understands אלהים as pl." 27.

amount of objection forwarded by the Deuteronomistic school would indicate its prevalence in the cultic practice of their time, whenever that happened to be.<sup>142</sup>

### III.viii. Tauromorph Imagery as Representative of YHWH

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The biblical texts demonstrate that YHWH was represented by bull or calf imagery, in particular Exodus 32 and 1 Kings 12:28-31. Furthermore, several examples of tauromorph statuary have been uncovered throughout the early Israelite area. Such representations are another example of the widespread nature of portable iconography which could function to take focus away from a centralised temple complex. Of particular note is the find from the Bull Site.

The Bull Site was uncovered atop a hill about nine kilometres east of Dothan in 1978 by Amihai Mazar.<sup>143</sup> The site was surrounded by a temenos wall and contained cultic paraphernalia<sup>144</sup> enough to enable its identification as a cultic site,<sup>145</sup> the most notable of which was a bronze bull, seventeen point five by twelve point five centimetres in size.<sup>146</sup> A similar figure was discovered by Yadin at Hazor, indicating a widespread usage.<sup>147</sup> The Bull Site is commonly dated to the Iron I period, making it a good indication of the cultic

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<sup>142</sup> As the various theories go, it is possible to consider this practice to be in decline as early as the seventh century, or as late as the fifth, depending on which Deuteronomistic dating classification one subscribes to.

<sup>143</sup> Mazar, "The 'Bull Site'," 27-42.

<sup>144</sup> Including a *maṣṣeba*.

<sup>145</sup> According to the criteria set out in chapter 2. Mettinger considers it "far-fetched to dispute the cultic" interpretation of the site, *No Graven Image*, 155.

<sup>146</sup> Mazar, "The 'Bull Site': An Iron Age I Open Cult Place," 27-32; Zevit, *The Religions of Ancient Israel*, 178-179.

<sup>147</sup> Yigael Yadin, *Hazor*, 82-85; Hess, *Israelite Religions*, 236. The bronze bull was one of a large number of items found in a temple setting during the excavations of area H at Hazor, Yadin, *Hazor*, 79-99. The excavation of area H also uncovered a tiny bull statue of Mycenaean design, 99.

practices during the time of the early monarchy.<sup>148</sup> Zevit determines that the existence of such a site, when taken into consideration with other similar sites throughout Israel, is evidence of the widespread use of *bāmôth* throughout the area.<sup>149</sup>

Further testimony of bull iconography relating to YHWH can be found in examples not only from the Bull Site, but also the representation of a cow and suckling calf on pithos A from Kuntillet 'Ajrud.<sup>150</sup> The greatest debate among scholars relating to such imagery and its association with YHWH is not that it belonged to that deity, but whence it originated. Bull iconography has been associated with El, as demonstrated in KTU 1.1, but calf iconography has been associated with Baal.<sup>151</sup> Given the Deuteronomistic attempts to associate the tauromorph iconography of YHWH with Baal instead of with El, replacing the term for 'bull' with that for 'calf' in passages referring to such may have been an intentional move on their part, although such a theory does not account for the calf depiction from Kuntillet 'Ajrud. Overall it appears that by the time of the division of the kingdom and Jeroboam's move from Shiloh to Dan and Bethel, YHWH was deeply rooted in the iconography of the bull or calf and that this association was taken up by Dtr as a point of apostasy in order to validate

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<sup>148</sup> Mettinger, *No Graven Image*, 155; Zevit, *The Religions of Ancient Israel*, 178-179; contra Coogan, "Of Cults and Cultures: Reflections on the Interpretation of Archaeological Evidence," *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* 119.1 (1987), 1-2. Hess maintains a neutral position on this matter, *Israelite Religions*, 236.

<sup>149</sup> Zevit, *The Religions of Ancient Israel*, 180.

<sup>150</sup> That all the pictographs on pithoi A and B from the site at Kuntillet 'Ajrud are related to one another and portray various representations of YHWH and his Asherah and associated imagery is outlined by Brian B. Schmidt, "The Iron Age *Pithoi* from Horvat Teman or Kuntillet 'Ajrud: Some New Proposals," *JANER* 2 (2002), 91-125. The Kuntillet 'Ajrud evidence will be discussed further in chapter 6. While Smith debates the associations that the imagery of the bull or calf conjure with both Baal and El, he appears to hold to the notion that it was also original to YHWH. In doing so he notes the frequent occurrences of deities in the ANE who were referred to in such a way. Referring to a deity as a bull is tantamount to noting its chiefdom. Mark S. Smith, *The Early History of God*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002), 83-85.

<sup>151</sup> As is implied by Smith, *The Early History of God*, 84-85. Smith states that "In any case, the Canaanite tradition of the bull iconography ultimately provides the background for this rendering of Yahweh." 85. Fleming notes that "Baal/Haddu of Ugarit and Canaan has a largely indirect association with bulls, but it is with the adult version, and the only references to 'the calf of El' in Ugaritic literature appear to involve some sort of derivative demon." Fleming, "If El is a Bull, Who is a Calf?," 25. Fleming argues that although calf and bull iconography appear to have alternated in their usage, stating that "their use is not random." 23.

their reforms. Hess notes that an aniconic view of a previously iconographically represented deity is highly irregular.<sup>152</sup> That something pressing would have occasioned such a strange ideological shift is likely, but the mechanism thereof is elusive.

Condemnation of the widespread nature of iconography, including tauromorph imagery, benefited the centralising policies of Dtr by exercising control over the distribution of mechanisms of cultic practice. Such control promoted their wealth by restricting opportunities for the establishment of independent places of worship in the form of temples and *bāmôth*. The ability of shrines and other places of worship to grow from the installation of a single *maššeba* attests to the ease with which such a situation could occur. Kempinski and Van Seters have both noted the centrality of *maššebot* to open-air cult places, indicating that such structures were integral to one another.<sup>153</sup> Such classifications are also in line with the criteria set out by Renfrew for the identification of cultic places.<sup>154</sup>

There are several gods from Canaan which were represented by tauromorph iconography. The primary two of these, aside from YHWH, were El and Baal. Both of these deities are mentioned in the biblical texts, but only one is highly polemicised. It is Baal whom the biblical texts revile, while 'El' is used as an epithet of YHWH himself.<sup>155</sup> The syncretistic relationship of YHWH and El has often been considered, yet is not in accord with the archaeological evidence or with our knowledge of the development of Judah and Israel

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<sup>152</sup> He states specifically that "The fact that Yahweh allows no images of himself is unusual in comparison with other ancient Near Eastern deities." Hess, *Israelite Religions*, 160.

<sup>153</sup> Aharon Kempinski, "The Middle Bronze Age," in *The Archaeology of Ancient Israel*, edited by Amnon Ben-Tor, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 174; John Van Seters, *The Hyksos: A New Investigation*, (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1966), 41-43.

<sup>154</sup> Colin Renfrew, *The Archaeology of Cult: The Sanctuary at Phylakopi*, (London: The British School of Archaeology at Athens, 1985), 18-21.

<sup>155</sup> Norman K. Gottwald, *The Tribes of Yahweh. A Sociology of the Religion of Liberated Israel, 1250-1050 B.C.E.*, (London: SCM Press, 1979), 683-684; Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, 44-60, and *From Epic to Canon. History and Literature in Ancient Israel*, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 87-90; Smith, *The Early History of God*, 32-43.

as it is understood today. The archaeology points to the notion that the Israelites are autochthonous to Canaan.<sup>156</sup> As has been discussed above, there is also a sufficient amount of evidence to lead to the conclusion that YHWH is a later hypostatisation of El, which when considering the case of Asherah is vital, as it legitimately links the two deities in traditional Israelite cultic practice. The data from Kuntillet 'Ajrud and Khirbet el Qom support this notion.<sup>157</sup> Olyan states that: "The patriarchal narratives of cult founding at Bethel, Hebron and Beersheba indicate that the sacred tree and the pillar (*maššēba*) were legitimate in the Yahwistic cult early on, and were not considered illegitimate in the time of the Yahwist or Elohist."<sup>158</sup> The ethnogenesis of a people who identified themselves as 'Israelite' therefore maintained this notion of their earliest roots with people living in the Levant. It can then be concluded that elements of cultic practice from the area, such as bull statuary, *maššēboth*, *bāmôth*, and *asherim* formed the basis of the theology from which Dtr's policies evolved.<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> All the extant archaeological evidence points to the theory that the Canaanite and early Israelite cults were, if not identical, extremely similar as for example outlined by William Dever, *Did God Have a Wife? Archaeology and Folk Religion in Ancient Israel*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2005), 252-303, and by Finkelstein, "Patriarchs, Exodus, Conquest: Fact or Fiction," 43-44. Finkelstein states that "Furthermore, in sharp contradiction to the theory of a great migration of nomads from the north, the continuity of architecture, pottery styles, and settlement patterns suggests that the population of Canaan in this inter-urban phase was predominantly indigenous." Kathleen Kenyon has also pointed out that, archaeologically speaking, the emergence of the Israelites was so sporadic and gradual that there is no archaeological evidence to contradict this theory. She states specifically that "Archaeologically, at no one point in the history of any site can one say that the Israelites appear... Moreover, in those sites such as Tell Beit Mirsim at which occupation continues after the destruction, there is no immediate change of culture, on the evidence of the material remains, that would enable one to say that a new people had occupied the site." Kathleen Kenyon, *Royal Cities of the Old Testament*, (New York: Schocken Books, 1971), 8.

<sup>157</sup> This data will be examined in chapter 6 below.

<sup>158</sup> Olyan, *Asherah and the Cult of Yahweh in Israel*, 5.

<sup>159</sup> Gottwald states of the Israelite settlement of Canaan that "Israel emerged as a social system in Canaan by stages. It is impossible to point to a single date when Israel came fully into being, and it is necessary to conceive its course as a social system in terms of decades of development which continued up to the verge of the monarchy under Saul." Gottwald, *The Tribes of Yahweh*, 33, original italics. To this Finkelstein adds that "The settlement processes that took place in the highlands of Canaan in the Iron I had much in common with two preceding waves of occupation in these areas. These analogies reinforce the hypothesis that much of the Iron I settlement activity was part of a long-term, cyclic mechanism of alternating processes of sedentarization and nomadization on indigenous groups in response to changing political, economic, and social circumstances. Translating these words into simple language, one can say that the early Israelites were, in fact, Canaanites." Israel Finkelstein, "When and How did the Israelites Emerge?," in *The Quest for the Historical Israel*, 83.

An example of this can be found in the discussion surrounding the deities YHWH and El. Day has concluded that YHWH and El are indistinguishable, thus suggesting an origin for one which is external to the cult of the area. This results in a syncretistic development of the identities of these deities. Day does not agree with the arguments of Cross to this effect.<sup>160</sup> “It is interesting that the Old Testament has no qualms in equating Yahweh with El, something which stands in marked contrast to its vehement opposition to Baal (cf. Hos. 2.18).”<sup>161</sup> These two positions stand in marked contradistinction. Such a syncretism reflects the notion that the Israelites and their deity YHWH have an origin external to the land in which they eventually settled – a notion which is contradicted by the Bible itself.<sup>162</sup>

The biblical texts are vehemently anti-Baal, including the books of the prophets, indicating a deep-seated abhorrence of the equation of YHWH and Baal (Num. 25:3-5; Judges 2:11, 13, 3:7; 1 Kings 18:18, 19:18, 22:54; 2 Kings 10:25-28, 17:16, 21:3).<sup>163</sup> Not once do the biblical texts offer condemnation upon worshippers of El. It is clear from the development of the cult and its terminology that the advent of YHWH as a separate deity from El is a case of appellative differences rather than syncretism.<sup>164</sup> Regarding bull or calf iconography, such evidence is tentative, and were it not for the biblical evidence it is

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However, the “ethnogenesis” proposed by Niehr is a more likely proposition for the development of Israel as distinct from Canaan. Niehr, “‘Israelite’ Religion and ‘Canaanite’ Religion,” in *Religious Diversity in Ancient Israel and Judah*, 23-32.

<sup>160</sup> Day, *Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan*, 37-39. The legitimate, non-syncretistic link between YHWH and El is outlined in Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, 74-75.

<sup>161</sup> Day, *Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan*, 14. It is however unclear as to what Day is arguing in this instance. He appears to be implying that this is a clear case of syncretism that was officially recognised, but at the same time is arguing that such a large number of YHWH’s traits come from El that they might as well have been the same god originally, and that the syncretism is actually between YHWH/El and Baal, but is unable to be officially recognised as such.

<sup>162</sup> However, Knight argues that syncretism is integral to the nature of Israelite religion, *Law, Power, and Justice in Ancient Israel*, 81.

<sup>163</sup> Day, *Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan*, 14-15.

<sup>164</sup> As is indicated by the frequent use of epithets for YHWH such as El Elyon (Gen. 14:18) and El Shaddai throughout the texts (Gen. 17:1). El as a specific epithet appears in Gen. 33:20 and 35:7.

unlikely that an association would have been made between the archaeological finds and YHWH. As they are, the finds have enabled scholars to more clearly identify the god YHWH with the high-god El and also with Asherah.<sup>165</sup>

### III.ix. The significance of Ex. 32 and 1 Kings 12:28-31

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Exodus 32 is the first time that an association between YHWH and tauromorph imagery appears in the biblical text. While not specifically a Deuteronomistic passage, this scene serves a dual purpose for Dtr's campaign: firstly, Ex. 32 demonstrates the distaste of YHWH for any imagery (and conversely indicates to the modern reader that such imagery was considered legitimate at some stage); secondly, it places the Aaronid priesthood, which typically served at *bāmôth*, in a negative light. In doing so it also explicitly posits the Levites as the only people, distinct from Aaron, who are "for the Lord" (Ex. 26).<sup>166</sup> 1 Kings 12:28-31 contains a reflection of the words of Aaron in Ex. 32:4: "This is your god, O Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt!"<sup>167</sup> This could have been a ritual phrase upon the

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<sup>165</sup> Day, *Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan*, 34-41. Day details the evidence for the association of the bull or calf imagery of El with YHWH, and further links this imagery back to the patriarch Jacob. He notes that "Jacob's god may well have been called originally 'the Bull of Jacob', which would be appropriate for the deity El." 38. Day also argues that it is more likely that the bull or calf statues were intended to directly represent YHWH than that they were pedestals for him, 40. This view is supported by Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, 73-75; *contra* Wyatt, who argues that bull and calf imagery are distinct from one another and represent separate deities. El is the deity who is represented by a bull, and Baal by a calf, Wyatt, "Of Calves and Kings," 81-82; Chalmers determines that the patriarchal narratives have been manipulated in such a way as to specifically equate El with YHWH, R. Scott Chalmers, "Who is the Real El? A Reconstruction of the Prophet's Polemic in Hosea 12:5a," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 68 (2006), 629-630.

<sup>166</sup> That Dtr often expressed anti-Aaronid sentiments is noted by Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, 73 and 195-215; Doorly, *Obsession with Justice*, 153-155.

<sup>167</sup> The JPS translates these two passages slightly differently. Aside from the lead-in sections of the statement (אלהיך ישראל אשר העלוך מארץ מצרים in Exodus and ויאמרו אלהיך ישראל אשר העלוך מארץ מצרים in Kings) both texts read אלהיך ישראל אשר העלוך מארץ מצרים. The material difference is between "this" and "these" and can thus be attributed to context. Cross argues that the singular version of the phrase is most likely the earlier, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, 73-74.

presentation of a new cult statue.<sup>168</sup> Jeroboam places his two calves in Bethel and Dan<sup>169</sup> and the people go to worship them which “proved to be a source of guilt” (12:30). In this passage it is unclear whether the greater sin was in creating the calves, or in establishing sites of worship at ‘external’ sanctuaries. That the calves were meant to represent YHWH is evident from the ritual phrase. While Jeroboam’s reign is dated considerably earlier than it is possible to place Dtr, he provided a convenient starting point in the ‘history’ for the apostasy of Israel.

### III.x. Conclusion

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It can thus be concluded from an analysis of Exodus 32 and 1 Kings 12:28-31, that the prevailing iconography associated with YHWH throughout Israelite history up until the reign of Josiah at the earliest, was a bull or calf. This imagery, combined with *maššeboth*, proved to be a portable means towards the establishment of places of worship external to the Jerusalem Temple complex. During the time of Dtr, such a means of promoting external worship presented a threat to the power base and financial capacity of the Jerusalem

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<sup>168</sup> The presentation of cult statuary is outlined by Mark S. Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism. Israel's Polytheistic Background and the Ugaritic Texts*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 182-188. Smith details the way in which the statue of the deity was considered a living presence, requiring feeding, clothing and housing. Once a statue or other cultic object representing a deity was completed, a ‘mouth-opening’ ceremony would be conducted to invoke the presence of the deity. A similar analysis is undertaken by Niehr, “In Search of YHWH’s Cult Statue,” 76-78; Hundley argues that the symbol of a deity was no less the deity itself than an anthropomorphic representation thereof. Michael B. Hundley, *Gods in Dwellings. Temples and Divine Presence in the Ancient Near East*, (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2013), 220-221. He states that “the mere fact that a cult image did not look exactly like a deity’s ‘true’ form does not mean that it was not the god itself or, more precisely, the divine-image symbiosis.” 221.

<sup>169</sup> An act which Doorly argues offended the Levitical priesthood in Shiloh, *Obsession with Justice*, 27-33. He states that “This was a rejection of the Levitical priesthood by Jeroboam, and several times later we read of Jeroboam appointing priests who were not Levites for his shrines (1 Kings 12:31 and 13:33).” 32. Arie debates the historicity of the shrine at Dan and also Dtr’s motivation for including it alongside Bethel in the account. He states that “Inserting Dan into the story of the golden calves was probably an attempt to legitimize Israelite cult in an old Aramaean centre or rather to legitimize the occupation of distant areas during the 8<sup>th</sup> century – the period when the Northern Kingdom of Israel had reached its zenith.” Eran Arie, “Reconsidering the Iron Age II Strata at Tel Dan: Archaeological and Historical Implications,” *Tel Aviv* 35.1 (2008), 37-38.

priesthood. It can therefore be argued that the elimination of this iconography from the cult practices of Israel and Judah in the 7<sup>th</sup> century BCE was the result of a necessity to abolish any and all iconography which could threaten centralisation. Although their rhetoric was couched in religious terms, Dtr were able to promote centralisation of the cult at the Temple in Jerusalem over and above all other places of worship to the benefit of economic gain. In doing so, Dtr were forced to re-write the laws of sacrifice and re-structure the judicial and financial systems.

Given that the main thrust of Dtr's reforms is on centralisation of the cult in Jerusalem and that all of their reforms were geared towards achieving this end, it becomes apparent that the real sin of Jeroboam in 1 Kings 12:28-31 was not in the division of the kingdom or of the worship of bull statues, which, as has been demonstrated, have been a legitimate aspect of Israelite cultic practice at some stage. Jeroboam's sin was in providing the people of Israel with *an alternate location at which to worship*, besides the Temple in Jerusalem. This was the action upon which Dtr chose to focus as their point of departure from what had formerly been perfectly legitimate cultic practices.

The potential for accumulation of lands owned by *bāmôth* that were eliminated was considerable, as was the potential for greater income from interest bearing loans and other transactions. Although the question of ownership of land by the Jerusalem Temple is still open, it is possible to conclude that it is more likely than not, that the Temple complex would have owned land for the grazing of livestock and production of grains and other agricultural produce for the support of the Temple community. Thus, the advantage of the Deuteronomistic polemic against *bāmôth* was twofold: it enabled Dtr to eradicate those places associated with Yahwistic cult practice that would detract from the central sanctuary,

and it resulted in an opportunity to appropriate all assets and business accrued or enjoyed by such places. Incidentally, such a move opened further opportunities for economic gain in the alteration of the laws of sacrifice and transportation of tithes to the central sanctuary. That such alterations to the laws of sacrifice, judiciary and finance were deemed necessary by Dtr speaks to the radical and innovative nature of their reforms. Further condemnation of paraphernalia associated with *bāmôth*, such as *maššeboth*, ensured that such places were unable to re-establish themselves and develop into further competition for the Jerusalem Temple complex.

## IV. Tithes in the Bible and Ancient Israel.

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Taxation was as much a part of everyday life in the ancient world as it is today. The most common form of taxation in the ANE was the tithe.<sup>1</sup> It is known from the Bible that taxes were paid to the king, and also to the Temple in the form of tithes (Deut. 12:5-11, 14:22-28; 1 Sam. 8:15-17; 2 Kings 23:35; 2 Chron. 24:5-10, 31:4-10; Neh. 5:4-5, 10:28-39). Claburn has speculated that Levites functioned as tax collectors,<sup>2</sup> and Stevens notes that taxes were commonly collected at the gates of cities in Israel and the ANE.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, there are a large number of passages in the DH related to giving tithes to the Levites (Num. 18:21-26; Deut. 26:12; 2 Chron. 31:12; Neh. 10:37-38, 12:44, 13:5). As has been established above, Dtr had close ties to the Levites from Shiloh who relocated to Jerusalem to make that cultic location their permanent home.<sup>4</sup> While a factional view of the constitution of Dtr indicates that not all members of the movement were Levites, their heavy focus on the welfare of that particular group is indicative of a vested interest; one with significant

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<sup>1</sup> Donald W. Jones, *Economic Theory and the Ancient Mediterranean*, (West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2014), 154; Berman, *Created Equal: How the Bible Broke with Ancient Political Thought*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 92; Robert A. Oden Jr, "Taxation in Biblical Israel," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 12.2 (1984), 164-165.

<sup>2</sup> W. Eugene Claburn, "The Fiscal Basis of Josiah's Reforms," *JBL* 92.1 (March, 1973), 18-20.

<sup>3</sup> Marty E. Stevens, "Tithes and Taxes: The Economic Role of the Jerusalem Temple in its Ancient Near Eastern Context," (PhD diss., Union Theological Seminary and Presbyterian School of Christian Education, 2002), 112-114, 138-139.

<sup>4</sup> *Contra* Claburn, who believes that the reforms are specific to Josiah and thus disadvantage the Levites to too great an extent to have originated with them. He considers "the fiscal explanation of the reforms as something perpetrated *against* the Levites." Claburn, "The Fiscal Basis of Josiah's Reforms," 22. He considers the Levites 'destroyed' by the reforms, 18. However, the reverse could also be true. The primacy of the Levites throughout the Deuteronomistic History and their promotion as enforcers, judges, scribes and tax collectors (the very tax collection that he cites as evidence for their demise, 18-19) speaks to the notion that while the Levites may have been initially unsettled by the changes, they were in a strong position to gain greatly from them. Furthermore, there is no direct evidence that Josiah was the immediate recipient of Temple funds. Taxes and tithes were brought to the Temple where the Levites held sway. No doubt there was an arrangement between King and Temple, but the first stop for the income was the Temple treasury rather than that of the palace.

economic implications. Such welfare is promoted strongly throughout Deuteronomy and the DH, as will be demonstrated throughout the analysis to follow.

This chapter will propose that the link between the themes of tithing and the Levites throughout the work of Dtr indicates a vested mutual interest in the welfare of both groups. This includes considerable focus on the laws of centralisation and key passages in the books of Kings, Nehemiah and Amos. In either moving the Levites into Jerusalem to serve at the central sanctuary, or creating an alternate vocation for them in the collection of tithes and taxes for that sanctuary, Dtr bound the status and function of the Levites with the project of cultic centralisation in an inextricable fashion. Such a connection was a profitable one for the Levites, serving to increase their wealth through tithes and a portion of taxes collected (according to Neh. 10:38 this could have been anything up to ninety percent of the taxes, with only ten percent going to the Temple).<sup>5</sup> These ties are demonstrated throughout the biblical texts.

Unfortunately, there is currently no extant extra-biblical evidence specifically pertaining to taxation from ancient Israel,<sup>6</sup> making comparisons with the peoples of the surrounding area invaluable. The only current example of a large body of documents of a financial nature from ancient Israel are the Samaria ostraca, which Niemann believes to be

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<sup>5</sup> Viviane Baesens, "Royal Taxation and Religious Tribute in Hellenistic Palestine," in *Ancient Economies, Modern Methodologies: Archaeology, Comparative History, Models and Institutions*, edited by Peter F. Bang, Mamoru Ikeguchi and Harmut G. Ziche, (Bari: Edipuglia, 2006), 188

<sup>6</sup> As is noted by Augustine Pagolu, *The Religion of the Patriarchs*, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 171. He further states that "The pentateuchal tithe laws, whatever their date, reflect only the time of the standardization of tithing in Israel, not the origin of the practice. The evidence from the ancient Near East clearly suggests that the practice, as both secular and sacred tax, was very ancient." 190.

transaction records of a commercial nature and which do not pertain to taxation.<sup>7</sup> This position is supported by Nam, who argues that the quantities represented in the ostraca are not sufficient for taxation.<sup>8</sup> The difficulty posed to translation by the ambiguous use of *lamed* to mean either 'to' or 'for' causes complications for a correct identification of the purpose of the ostraca.<sup>9</sup> It is clear from the DH that the welfare of the people was also of great concern for the Deuteronomists.<sup>10</sup>

In light of the Deuteronomistic hand in both the Pentateuch and the Historical narratives, it is necessary that passages which show support for the Deuteronomistic reforms be examined with a hermeneutic of suspicion. Anything relating to money flowing from the people to members of the Deuteronomistic movement warrants cautious investigation. It is this focus on fiscal concerns which brings us back to the following quote from Claburn:

Thus one can further ask, "Could it be that somewhere behind all that grisly, rampaging, sanctuary-smashing piety of Josiah somebody was out to get something more substantial than somebody else's deity symbols? If so, who was after what from whom?" Now read one of the deuteronomic versions of the centralization demand and notice its punchline: "Three times a year all your males shall appear before Yahweh your God at the place which he will choose: at the feast of unleavened bread, at the feast of weeks, at the feast of booths. They shall not appear before Yahweh empty-handed." (Deut 16:16).<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Hermann Michael Niemann, "A New Look at the Samaria Ostraca: The King-Clan Relationship," *Tel Aviv* 35 (2008), 251-252; *contra* Paula McNutt, who considers the Samaria ostraca to be evidence of taxation in Israel, *Reconstructing the Society of Ancient Israel*, (London: SPCK, 1999), 150.

<sup>8</sup> Roger S. Nam, "Power Relations in the Samaria Ostraca," *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* 144.3 (2012), 155. While they may not pertain directly to taxation, McNutt notes that they are evidence of a redistributive system operating in ancient Israel during the Iron II. McNutt, *Reconstructing the Society of Ancient Israel*, 158.

<sup>9</sup> Nam, "Power Relations in the Samaria Ostraca," 155-156;

<sup>10</sup> As is stressed by Doorly, *Obsession With Justice. The Story of the Deuteronomists*, (New York: Paulist Press, 1994).

<sup>11</sup> Claburn, "The Fiscal Basis of Josiah's Reforms," 14. This is also noted by Douglas A. Knight, "Whose Agony? Whose Ecstasy? The Politics of Deuteronomic Law," in *Shall not the Judge of all the Earth do What is Right? Studies on the Nature of God in Tribute to James L. Crenshaw*, edited by David Penchansky and Paul L. Redditt, (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2000), 97-100.

Claburn voices the suspicions regarding such texts, as many of the passages in this section also refer either to the Levites or to הכהנים היכל who, as has been established in chapter 1 above, are the priests exercising control of the central sanctuary in Jerusalem. As the biblical text makes clear, these priests have close ties with the Levites, and were in some way closely associated with the discovery of the book of the law and the Deuteronomistic reforms.<sup>12</sup>

#### IV.ii. Tithing to the Levites

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The biblical theme of tithing to the Levites begins in Numbers 18:21 with the reported words of the Lord: “And to the Levites I hereby give all the tithes in Israel as their share in return for the services that they perform, the services of the Tent of Meeting.” This passage has been considered, along with those permitting ‘secular’ slaughter, as one of those which indicates a degree of secularisation undertaken by Dtr.<sup>13</sup> This is due to the appearance that Dtr condone a transference of tithe from immediate sacrifice to more easily portable goods, resulting in the slaughter of meat in a non-cultic environment. However, tithes in the more portable form are still to be paid to those who are considered

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<sup>12</sup> As was originally noted by Gerhard von Rad, *Studies in Deuteronomy*, (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1953), 66-69.

<sup>13</sup> Moshe Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School*, (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1983), 213-215. Weinfeld states that “The tithe, which the Priestly document designates as ‘holy to the Lord’ (Lev. 27:30-3), and which according to a second tradition accrues to the Levites (Num. 18:21-32), remains by deuteronomistic legislation the property of the original owner (14:22-7). Furthermore, it may be secularized and employed for profane purposes on payment of its equivalent monetary value...” 214-215; Vogt doubts the efficacy of Weinfeld’s conclusions, stating that “there are significant problems with the ideology implied by secularization, because it ascribes to the author(s) of Deuteronomy a world view that represents a radical departure from the prevailing world view in the ANE and is more reasonably akin to modern, rather than ANE, perspectives.” Peter T. Vogt, *Deuteronomistic Theology and the Significance of Torah. A Reappraisal*, (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 97.

to be in the service of the Lord.<sup>14</sup> It also serves to reiterate the legitimacy of the Levites as those especially designated to serve the Lord. Thus it gives precedence to the Levites over and above the Aaronid priesthood.<sup>15</sup> The end result of Num. 18:21 and its economic assertions, is that it attempts to ensure a steady revenue flow in the direction of the Levites, in return for a service rendered at a time far beyond the memory of those who would be offering up those tithes. Sherwood notes that “The section on the tithe given to the Levites is framed by the word *helep*, ‘payment.’”<sup>16</sup> Zevit notes that the only aspects of Ancient Israelite life events – such as marriage, planting and harvesting of crops, building of houses – that remain outlined in the biblical text are the economic ones. The sacred side of these matters was not of as much concern to Dtr as safeguarding Israel’s institutions.<sup>17</sup> This leads to a dichotomy in the texts, whereby the primacy of the Levites is stressed over and above any other priesthood, but this was the only cultic matter with which Dtr were concerned aside from ensuring the appropriate direction of income. Deuteronomistic redaction may well be responsible for the bias in this passage and Sherwood has not seriously considered

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<sup>14</sup> Vogt, *Deuteronomic Theology and the Significance of Torah*, 81; Brueggemann notes that the “profound secularization” of tithing is manifested when the owner YHWH does not want the tithe but redirects it for the use of the community. With respect to the tithing of every third year (Deut. 14:28-9) Brueggemann goes on to state: “Thus the religious rite is transposed into an act that concerns the local economy.” *Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries: Deuteronomy*, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001), 162.

<sup>15</sup> The preference of Levites over Aaronid priests has been discussed by Doorly, *Obsession with Justice*, 153-155; *contra* Nicholson, who argues against Levitical authorship and in favour of prophetic transmission and involvement, E.W. Nicholson, *Deuteronomy and Tradition*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1967), 69-82. Nicholson states that “it is surely reasonable to suppose that the prophetic party itself would have been in full possession of a knowledge of the old traditions and that Hosea and his contemporaries in the prophetic office would have inherited this knowledge from their predecessors. If this is accepted then there is clearly no necessity to conjecture that Hosea derived such knowledge from levitical circles.” 76.

<sup>16</sup> Stephen K. Sherwood, *Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy*, (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 2002), 170; Baesens notes that “In Nehemiah (10:38, 13:5 and 12:47), the Levites are entitled to 90% of the tithe, and the priests to 10%. So in the Persian period the Levites were the main beneficiaries of the tithe.” Viviane Baesens, “Royal Taxation and Religions Tribute in Hellenistic Palestine,” in *Ancient Economies, Modern Methodologies: Archaeology, Comparative History, Models and Institutions*, edited by Peter F. Bang, Mamoru Ikeguchi and Harmut G. Ziche, (Bari: Edipuglia, 2006), 188.

<sup>17</sup> Ziony Zevit, *The Religions of Ancient Israel. A Synthesis of Parallactic Approaches*, (New York: Continuum, 2001), 664-667.

the redactional issues at play. Noth, on the other hand, has made a few telling points regarding this passage and those surrounding it. He noted the stress that the text places on the 'danger' involved in unauthorised persons approaching the 'holy of holies', and the divine wrath which would follow such an event. He has commented on the disconnect between considering that the event cited as basis for this view in chapters 16 and 17, did not actually involve 'strangers' entering the sanctuary.<sup>18</sup> Noth also observed the curious disagreement between this passage, which directs all tithes solely to the priests and Levites, and Deut. 12:18-19 and 14:27, where they are to be shared out among many. His conclusion is that "Presumably this rule was practiced in a late period which can no longer be precisely determined."<sup>19</sup> This passage points to a move toward, or later justification for, a Deuteronomistic monopoly on tithes.<sup>20</sup> Noth has observed the inconsistencies inherent in this text.<sup>21</sup>

Since, according to Lev. 16.2-4, 34a, the 'holy of holies' could be entered only by the high priest and only on a particular occasion 'once a year', this special high-priestly function is thought of in the present passage as being included in the 'gift' of the 'priesthood', for it is difficult to conceive that a new element is being introduced here whereby all the priests could have been active continually in the 'holy of holies'. Vv. 6f. produce a disjointed effect and might be regarded as a later addition, were it not for the fact that the whole of vv. 1-7 is so disordered and lacking in unity that one can scarcely expect any consistency of thought.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Martin Noth, *Numbers, Old Testament Library*, (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1968), 133-132.

<sup>19</sup> Noth, *Numbers*, 137.

<sup>20</sup> Altmann notes that "In order to forge a more effective instrument of authority, it was necessary to bring together the tax income in the center, that is in Jerusalem... The decentralized procedure of the festivals along with the scattered consumption of meat (Deut 12:15) and distribution of the third year tithes effectively circumvent the king and the priest." Peter Altmann, *Festive Meals in Ancient Israel: Deuteronomy's Identity Politics in Their Ancient Near Eastern Context*, (Boston: Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co., 2011), 230, n.74.

<sup>21</sup> Noth, *Numbers*, 133.

<sup>22</sup> Noth, *Numbers*, 135.

According to Noth, this text is part of a Dtr redaction most likely during the time of the late monarchy, or possibly the exilic or even post-exilic period when Dtr were concentrating heavily on updating the ancient laws to conform with their own hegemonic agenda.<sup>23</sup>

From the point of view of both language and subject matter, this section belongs to the late period. It is dominated by expressions and technical terms characteristic of P; but this composition, clumsily and inconsequentially and carelessly put together as it is in many respects, certainly does not belong to the original P-narrative. This is also borne out by its subsequent connection with the P-narrative by means of all kinds of secondary additions.<sup>24</sup>

In Numbers 18:21 there is heavy emphasis placed on the importance of tithing to the priests and Levites, as well as on the 'danger' of 'unauthorised' worship. This ties in well with both Dtr's motive of economic gain and their method of condemning, in text and praxis, all other forms of worship that were not Temple-oriented even if legitimately Yahwistic. The stress revealed throughout these texts is that 'outside' worship is dangerous – no matter what its focus. The tone of Numbers 18:21 points to a Deuteronomistic effort to take control of both religious practice and tithing. Such control involved the insinuation of Levites into the ranks of the priesthood, as indicated by Num. 18:6. Any such insinuation would, by necessity, have had to be gradual.

This theme is further elucidated in Deuteronomy 18:1-8 and 26:12-13. Deut. 18:1-8 is a text dealing entirely with the dues which are to be given to the Levitical group which, as has been established in chapter 1 above, can be associated with Dtr.<sup>25</sup> The 'portion' to be allocated to the Levites is justified by their "hav(ing) no territorial portion" (18:1). However

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<sup>23</sup> Knight, "Whose Agony? Whose Ecstasy?," 97-100.

<sup>24</sup> Noth, *Numbers*, 134.

<sup>25</sup> Stephen L. Cook, "Micah's Deuteronomistic Redaction and the Deuteronomists' Identity," in *Those Elusive Deuteronomists: The Phenomenon of Pan-Deuteronomism*, edited by Linda S. Schearing and Steven L. McKenzie, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 229; Gerhard von Rad, *Deuteronomy: A Commentary*, (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1966), 25-26; Karel van der Toorn, *Scribal Culture and the Making of the Hebrew Bible*, (London: Harvard University Press, 2007), 102, 167-168.

as Tigay notes, this assertion is contradicted by several other passages (for example Lev. 25:32–34; Num. 35:1–8; Josh. 14:4, 21), wherein it is asserted that some of these Levites could have been in the possession of such assets (land, livestock, and other movable property) within the boundaries of other tribal lands, although the text claims that they have no designated tribal territory of their own.<sup>26</sup> The justification in v.5 is also partially contradicted by v.8, which implies that the Levites could have been in possession of a whole range of assets, that did not affect their entitlement to receive an equal share of Temple income and/or tithes.<sup>27</sup>

The changes in proportion between the proscription for priestly income (Deut. 18:1) and the larger ones allotted in Lev. 7:31–36 and Num. 18:18 has been noted by Baesens.<sup>28</sup> This is the result of a Deuteronomistic polemic against the Aaronid priesthood. Blenkinsopp has also debated the possibility that the Josianic reform and centralisation at the Jerusalem Temple, restricted the Levitical possibilities for employment by abolishing all the external

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<sup>26</sup> Jeffrey H. Tigay, *The JPS Torah Commentary. Deuteronomy*, (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1996), 170, 375. While both Leviticus and Numbers specify that priests are of Aaron's family, Deuteronomy expands this to include all priests and Levites in the tribe of Levi, and thus Deuteronomy 18:1–8 appears to conflate these rolls, specifying the provision for Levites to officiate in the Jerusalem Temple in v.8. Jules Gomes notes that "The requirement for Levites to minister at the cult is strictly Deuteronomistic (Deut. 18:1–8)." *The Sanctuary of Bethel and the Configuration of Israelite Identity*, (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co., 2006), 30. Such a conflation is also noted by Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School*, 228; the early permeation of this conflation into consideration of the role of priests and Levites is noted by Erhard S. Gerstenberger, *Leviticus: A Commentary*, (Louisville, Ky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 1. The distinction between priests and Levites in the work of Dtr is discussed by Richard D. Nelson, who argues that while Dtr do not consider *all* Levites to be priests *per se*, priests are to be drawn from the ranks of the Levites. Nelson, "The Role of the Priesthood in the Deuteronomistic History," in *Congress Volume: Leuven, 1989*, edited by J.A. Emerton, (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1991), 132–136. He states that "One opinion of Dtr is clear – all genuine priests must be from the tribe of Levi." 135

<sup>27</sup> Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 172. Such a system could have been via prebends, which are contracts taken out with a temple which entitle the priest or other 'employee' (such as gatekeepers or artisans) to a percentage of the temple income. An analysis of the prebendary system as evidenced through 6<sup>th</sup> century Babylon is undertaken by Caroline Waerzegger, "The Babylonian Priesthood in the Long Sixth Century BC," *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies* 54.2 (2011), 62–64. Waerzegger states that "The prebend system encompassed all professions that were sensitive to purity regulations, and a number of auxiliary professions like gatekeeping and measuring." 64.

<sup>28</sup> Baesens, "Royal Taxation and Religious Tribute in Hellenistic Palestine," 188. Baesens states that "in the Persian period the Levites were the main beneficiaries of the tithe."

shrines and 'high places'.<sup>29</sup> He concludes, however, that the Levitical group may only ever have been involved implicitly with the Jerusalem Temple, rather than with other places of worship.<sup>30</sup> Given the nature of the evidence examined above, this conclusion seems highly probable. There is no data to suggest Levitical involvement outside the Temple in Jerusalem, and before that the tent of the Tabernacle and Shechem. It is also difficult to associate Dtr's reform with the elimination of the other Yahwistic shrines, if doing so resulted in a significant drop in their potential for revenue accumulation.<sup>31</sup> It is much easier to reconcile these differences with the conclusion that the Levitical group were working only in Jerusalem and in concert with the monarchy that was centralised there.<sup>32</sup>

The provision of tithes to the Levites in Deut. 18:1-8 is often noted.<sup>33</sup> While this matter is important in itself, it circumvents the more fundamental questions raised by this

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<sup>29</sup> Joseph Blenkinsopp, "Deuteronomy," in *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, edited by Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, and Roland E. Murphy, (Avon: Geoffrey Chapman, 1989), 103. This is echoed by Mayes, *Deuteronomy*, 106-107; and Claburn, "Fiscal Basis," 18.

<sup>30</sup> Blenkinsopp "Deuteronomy," 103. The biblical text makes it clear that the Levites came to Jerusalem from Shechem in 2 Kings 23:9. Shechem is assigned to the Levites in Joshua 21:21, and Doorly notes that they may have begun to move south into Jerusalem during the Assyrian conflict. Doorly, *The Religion of Israel: A Short History*, (Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1997), 131-132. The Levites at Shechem are also discussed by Gomes, *The Sanctuary of Bethel and the Configuration of Israelite Identity*, 22-25. Blenkinsopp intends to say that the Levites became established in Jerusalem after they moved from their previous site and did not officiate at any other sanctuaries.

<sup>31</sup> However, as mentioned above, according to Claburn the Josianic reforms were not as advantageous to the prosperity of Dtr as they had hoped. Claburn, "Fiscal Basis," 18.

<sup>32</sup> Blenkinsopp, "Deuteronomy," 103. He notes that "To the extent that it succeeded, the Josianic centralization program must have restricted their opportunities for employment, though Levites cannot simply be identified as the priests of the high places." However, Mayes notes that "non-priestly Levites, did not originate as a result of the abolition of the high places and the centralization of sacrificial worship to one sanctuary." Mayes, *Deuteronomy*, 107.

<sup>33</sup> Altmann, *Festive Meals in Ancient Israel*, 212-215; Jack R. Lundbom, *Deuteronomy*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), 543-547; Brueggemann, *Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries: Deuteronomy*, 188-192; Mayes, *Deuteronomy*, 274-279; J.M. Powis Smith, *The Origin and History of Hebrew Law*, (Clark, New Jersey: The Lawbook Exchange, Ltd., 2005), 58-59. Powis Smith notes the innovation inherent to Deuteronomy 17-18.

passage.<sup>34</sup> As an example of this traditional focus, Craigie discusses the linguistic anomalies of the text focusing on the nature of the offerings or gifts to be given to the Levites:

If the word *isheheh* means 'offerings by fire,' then the sense is that the Levites would participate in portions of such offerings ... However, it is possible that the word should simply be translated 'gifts, offerings,' without any implications of sacrifice. This possibility seems quite likely in the context of the most general part of the legislation; the Levites would be supported by the generosity of the people, who have already been urged not to forget or neglect them.<sup>35</sup>

Craigie has mistaken the impetus of cultic authority with freewill and generosity.<sup>36</sup> At first glance it appears that social justice is the primary focus of Deut. 26:12-13. However, if this is so, why is the Levite mentioned alongside the widow and the orphan when, according to Deuteronomy 18:8, they could have been independently wealthy not only from receipt of such tithes, but also from inherited property. Surely the Levite is not necessarily in the helpless state of a widow or orphan! Not only that, but the average Levite male, it can be assumed, was perfectly able-bodied and healthy with all the same rights to work and act in society as other men.<sup>37</sup> It could be argued that they are in need because of their importance

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<sup>34</sup> Such as the matter of tithes being mandated to the Levites who could have been independently wealthy to begin with, as is intimated in Deut. 18:8.

<sup>35</sup> Craigie, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament. The Book of Deuteronomy*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1976), 258-259.

<sup>36</sup> Although no doubt the aim is to give the illusions of such freewill and generosity. The traditional view appears to be that such things should be freely given and not considered burdensome. Such a view of the state of affairs in ancient Israel is patently fallacious, as is noted by Oden, "Taxation in Biblical Israel," 163-164. Refusal to tithe appropriately could lead to ostracism from the community.

<sup>37</sup> Mark Leuchter argues for a new role for the regional Levites once their cultic positions at the local sanctuaries had been made redundant by the centralisation during the reign of Josiah. These Levites would be employed in the local judiciary. Leuchter, "'The Levite in Your Gates': The Deuteronomical Redefinition of Levitical Authority," *JBL* 126.3 (2007), 417-436. This appears to be a viable alternative for the employment of these men, and as noted by Stevens, gates were also a common place for the collection of taxes. Stevens, *Temples, Tithes and Taxes*, 71-75, 104-105. Claburn also proposes that the Levites were used as tax collectors, which could have served the dual purpose of providing employment for these men and also consolidating the revenue collection service by instigating "a hierarchically organized central internal revenue bureau of paid officials under (their) control." Claburn, "Fiscal Basis," 15, 18-19. This position is supported by Stevens, who also considers that the Levites were engaged in the collection of tithes and taxes: "Perhaps the people gave the tithes to the Levites who transported them to Jerusalem. By the agency of the Levites, then, all the people 'brought' tithes to Jerusalem." 96. She also states that in Mesopotamia "The right to collect temple tithes could be sold to persons outside the temple complex; presumably, the collector retained any commodities collected above the agreed amount, a situation ripe for corruption." *Temples, Tithes, and Taxes*, 97.

to the cult, and lack of land which is the consequence of this, but this argument ignores the aforementioned inheritance of 18:8. While it was common in the ANE for priests to be set apart from the working masses to be dedicated to cultic pursuits, as is demonstrated in the wealth of available data on the ancient Egyptians, such a group of wandering priests as the Levites is considerably more rare.<sup>38</sup> Such a scheme allowed for an adequate level of distribution of resources to enable the continuation of the local economy, whilst also ensuring the greater flow of wealth in the direction of the centralised Temple in Jerusalem and its Levitical priesthood. When coupled with an analysis of Nehemiah 10:33-40,<sup>39</sup> this conclusion becomes even more potent.

#### **IV.iii. Tithing to the Central Sanctuary**

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As has been discussed above, Deuteronomy 12:4-7 sets out the necessity for cultic centralisation according to the criteria of the *šem* theology. Along with this imperative is the injunction to tithe at one designated sanctuary and no other. Deut. 12:4-7 reads:

Do not worship the Lord your God in like manner, but look only to the site that the Lord your God will choose amidst all your tribes as His habitation, to establish His name there. There you are to go, and there you are to bring your burnt offerings and other sacrifices, your tithes and contributions, your votive and free-will offerings, and the firstlings of your herds and flocks. Together with your households, you shall feast there before the Lord your God, happy in all the undertakings in which the Lord your God has blessed you.

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<sup>38</sup> As demonstrated by the close ties between priests of certain temples in ancient Egypt as outlined in Donald B. Redford, *The Ancient Gods Speak. A Guide to Egyptian Religion*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 315-318. A passing comment by Redford states of the Egyptian priesthood that “It was also potentially lucrative, as priests on duty received a portion of the offerings presented to the gods and deceased kings in whose cults they served.” 315-316.

<sup>39</sup> As is discussed below.

It is clear that Deut. 12:4-7 is characterised by the Deuteronomistic *šem* proclamation<sup>40</sup> and that in addition, this passage deals with a broad spectrum of offerings and sacrifices, including specific tithes. The stress is thus on the *makom* (מקום) chosen by YHWH, the implication of which, when combined with a focus on tithing, leads the audience to instantly assume that this is the appropriate place for tithing and that there is no other. The lack of a specific place name in this passage and other similar passages has led some scholars to question if centralisation was initially meant for Jerusalem,<sup>41</sup> or if it initially referred to a single place in each territory<sup>42</sup> or to Shiloh.<sup>43</sup> However, given that the earliest possible date for Deuteronomy and the DH is during the time of Hezekiah when the Jerusalem Temple already existed, it can be concluded that the characteristic *šem* theology prevalent throughout Deuteronomy, is a Judahite phenomenon and can only refer to the Solomonic Temple in Jerusalem.<sup>44</sup>

The repetition in Deut. 12 has led some scholars to conclude that there are multiple redactions at work in this text.<sup>45</sup> Regardless of whether it was part of the initial redaction,

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<sup>40</sup> Tryggve Mettinger, *The Dethronement of Sabaoth. Studies in the Shem and Kabod Theologies*, (Lund: CWK Gleerup, 1982), 38-79 in particular 53-62. Mettinger considers the possibility that although attested in later redactions of the D work, the *šem* theology is a pre-exilic expression.

<sup>41</sup> Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 120.

<sup>42</sup> As implied by Mayes, *Deuteronomy*, 223-225, who considers the Dtr interpretation and re-crafting of the term to generate a "sense of exclusiveness." He notes that it is not an idea original to the Deuteronomists, 224.

<sup>43</sup> Sandra Richter discusses the possibility that it was Shiloh, "The Place of the Name in Deuteronomy," *VT* 57.3 (2007), 361-364.

<sup>44</sup> Although the phrase itself appears to have been common throughout the ANE, the exclusive use thereof in the DH is a unique phenomenon. Mayes states that "what is new in Deuteronomy is that it is integrated into an election theology: Yahweh has chosen the sanctuary as his possession.... the notion of a symbolic presence of the person who establishes his name is not to be divorced from the idea of claiming ownership: ownership is in fact claimed and established through the symbolic presence of the person in his name." *Deuteronomy*, 224.

<sup>45</sup> As is noted by O'Brien, "The 'Deuteronomistic History' as a Story of Israel's Leaders," *Australian Biblical Review* 37 (1989), 20, n.16; Mayes considers Deut. 12:1-7 to be the work of a second level Deuteronomistic redaction, for whom he cites the motivation of literary consistency "but also to clarify a possible ambiguity in the original centralization law", *Deuteronomy*, 222; Thomas Römer, *The So-Called Deuteronomistic History*, (New York: T&T Clark, 2007), 56-58.

the benefit of the repetition in this case is that it provided Dtr with an opportunity for more specificity in their list of offerings. This provided the opportunity to ensure that every conceivable type of offering found its way to the Temple in Jerusalem (the place of God's choosing), instead of leaving open the possibility for argument that only certain types should go to the Temple while others were offered to local sanctuaries.<sup>46</sup> However, the primary emphasis in Deut. 12:4-7 is on the making of all of these types of offerings – both collectively and individually. They are to be made in full at the one chosen place, as specified in the passage. This is therefore a Deuteronomistic passage designed to encourage people to worship *only* in the 'approved' place, and the focus is therefore on specifying what ought to be brought to the Temple for the priests: in short, all acceptable forms of offerings. This is a prescriptive passage, and focuses very heavily on the flow of revenue into the Temple complex, to the detriment of many previously acceptable forms of cultic practice.<sup>47</sup> Passages such as Deut. 12:4-7 have not always been dealt with comprehensively.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> An analysis of the different types of offerings that could have been presented at a cult place is provided by Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 121.

<sup>47</sup> Such as worship and offering at *bāmôth*, and the cultic sacrifice/slaughter of meat.

<sup>48</sup> Such as the commentary offered by Patrick D. Miller, *Deuteronomy*, (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1990). An example of a more traditional assessment of the motivations of Dtr is given by Miller, who begins his analysis of Deut. 12:4-7 by first stressing the importance that Deuteronomy places on the act and processes of right worship because the method of worship is intrinsically linked to the one being worshipped – in this case, YHWH. "Placement of the instruction about worship at the sanctuary in first position indicates clearly its priority for Deuteronomy, which assumes that the starting point for proper, full, and exclusive love of the Lord (the primary demand of the first and second commandments and the Shema) is found in the way Israel carries out the activities of worship. The radical and unyielding demand for a total commitment to God does not regard the practices and details of worship as incidental or secondary to other matters. Whatever else such commitment involves, it begins in the service of worship." Miller, *Deuteronomy*, 129. This is characteristic of Dtr, and acknowledges the importance of the symbolic nature of worship. However, it is not possible to divorce pious motives from material ones. As is witnessed time and again in the modern world and throughout history, there is always an underlying agenda. Here it is possible to see a clear acknowledgement of the power of symbols – in the form of the condemnation of iconography and the stress on "right" worship and sacrifice. The 'demotion' of the symbol representing the goddess Asherah is discussed in Jaco Beyers, "Can Symbols be 'Promoted' or 'Demoted'? Symbols as Religious Phenomena," *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 69.1 (2013), 6-7. He concludes that while the asherah remained a symbol in pre-exilic Israel, that symbol became associated with YHWH rather than the goddess who it originally represented.

#### IV.iv. Tithing in 1 and 2 Kings

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1 and 2 Kings contain a string of negative assessments of the Kings of Israel and Judah based not on their success in securing peace or economic prosperity for their people (for example, the scathing assessment of the brief reign of Omri in 1 Kings 16 and Micah 6:16),<sup>49</sup> but on their adherence to a religious ideal. Some of the criticisms levelled at these kings include:

- Refusal or failure to eliminate external sanctuaries (often polemicised as being associated with the cult of Baal and non-Yahwistic deities) and recognise the Jerusalem Temple as the only legitimate place of worship (1 Kings 12:31, 14:23, 15:14, 22:43; 2 Kings 12:3, 14:4, 15:4, 15:35, 16:4, 17:9);
- Refusal or failure to eliminate cult objects (2 Kings 21:17), also often polemicised as being associated with the cult of Baal and non-Yahwistic deities (2 Kings 17:29, 21:3);
- Refusal or failure to acknowledge the Levites as priests and legitimate recipients of tithes (1 Kings 12:31).<sup>50</sup>

Particular attention is to be paid to the larger number of passages relating to the establishment or maintenance of alternate places of worship. This is an indication of the primacy of such a theme in the minds and policies of Dtr. Those kings who were otherwise considered to have loved the Lord are nevertheless condemned for not having encouraged

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<sup>49</sup> This is despite Omri's clear military supremacy as reflected in the Mesha Stela and records of Shalmaneser III and Tiglath-Pileser II, and the prosperity that his reign appears to have brought to Israel for over a decade. The implications of these sources and the extent of the international reputation of Omri and his son Ahab are discussed in Grabbe, "The Kingdom of Israel from Omri to the Fall of Samaria: If We Only Had the Bible...." in *Ahab Agonistes: The Rise and Fall of the Omri Dynasty*, edited by Lester L. Grabbe, (London: T&T Clark, 2007), 73-87.

<sup>50</sup> Conversely, there are also the passages which demonstrate the piety of Josiah in striking down the 'idolatrous' priests (2 Kings 23:5, 20), smashing the altars and high places (2 Kings 23:8-19) and burning the *asherim* (2 Kings 23:6), after which he sacrifices and tithes appropriately (2 Kings 23:21-23). This is as much a demonstration of the priorities of Dtr as their condemnation of those kings who fail to uphold these standards.

or promoted worship at the central sanctuary in Jerusalem (such as 2 Kings 15:3-4). This is a single-mindedness of purpose which is not evident in other themes common to Dtr. 1 Kings 15:14-15 is an example of the Dtr priority of tithes to the central sanctuary above all other concerns, and to the primacy of the economic aspects of this theme. Loyalty, it would seem, is measured in monetary terms.

Although it is important not to worship other gods, or indeed to worship at all in other places, 1 Kings 15:14-15 suggests that these are insignificant compared to the crime of giving money to other gods and shrines. The passage reads: “The shrines, indeed, were not abolished; however, Asa was wholehearted with the Lord his God all his life. He brought into the House of the Lord all the consecrated things of his father and his own consecrated things – silver, gold, and utensils.” Thus this text contains the suggestion that appropriate tithing is the most important virtue. Compare Asa’s attitude to shrines and high places with that of Azariah (2 Kings 15:3-4) and it is clear that the donation of silver and gold at the central sanctuary becomes a yardstick for approval by the Deuteronomists. Furthermore, the large portion of the tithe which is to be allocated to the Levite distinguishes the tithe in Deuteronomy from earlier conceptions of the tithe, as has been argued by Vogt.<sup>51</sup> The approval of Asa’s actions stands in marked contradistinction to the disapproval of the actions of other kings who also do not satisfactorily conform to all aspects of the reform, and also do not donate heavily to the Temple.

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<sup>51</sup> Vogt, *Deuteronomic Theology and the Significance of Torah*, 80-81.

## IV.v. Tithes in the Prophets and Nehemiah

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As has been established above, the Deuteronomistic influence on the books of the prophets is limited. Thus, mention within the prophetic works of the importance of tithing to the Jerusalem Temple is a rare occurrence. Interestingly, the issue of tithes does not appear in Jeremiah, despite the effect of Deuteronomistic ideology. This can be considered the result of a difference in focus between Deuteronomy, the DH and Jeremiah.<sup>52</sup> The earlier elucidation of tithes can be gleaned from an analysis of Amos 4:4-5. A light Dtr redaction has been identified in the book of Amos.<sup>53</sup> Thus it is difficult to determine the level of satire inherent in this text. Amos 4:4-5 is a passage which is addressed to the northern tribes. It condemns the practice of tithing to other gods and altars, at least some of which are altars to YHWH, for example the shrine at Bethel. This is the very same practice that is glorified when applied to the tithing at the Temple for the Judean reformed 'official' YHWH. It would also be addressed to the people in Judah as an object lesson, of sorts. If Davies' proposal is considered this becomes even more pertinent. Davies has speculated that the exiles, now very heavily influenced by Deuteronomistic theology, returned to Judah

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<sup>52</sup> The book of Jeremiah is a slightly different genre to Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic History. Jeremiah belongs to the Latter Prophets, warning against sin and its effects and promoting social justice, while Deuteronomy reiterates the law to be followed and the DH demonstrates what will happen (and what has happened through 'history') to those who fail to follow this law. Thus the common theme running through these three sets of work is adherence to torah as set out in Deuteronomy, demonstrated throughout the DH and advocated by Jeremiah. Brueggemann states that "There can be no doubt that the Book of Jeremiah is intimately related to the Book of Deuteronomy... The tight connection between *commandments* and *sanctions* yields a symmetrical formulation of 'life or death' according to obedience or disobedience of the Torah". Brueggemann, *The Theology of the Book of Jeremiah*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 136, original italics. Brueggemann considers this connection to be particularly striking in Deut. 12-25 and 28. He also considers the theology of covenant to be a joint driving force behind both Dtr and Jeremiah, 136-143. It is therefore not feasible to seek direct parallels between these three sets of work, rather it is the overall thematic concern which joins them. The ideological, and sometimes linguistic, connections between Jeremiah and the DH have been noted by Römer, "How Did Jeremiah Become a Convert to Deuteronomistic Ideology?," in *Those Elusive Deuteronomists*, 189-199.

<sup>53</sup> As is discussed in Kugler, "The Deuteronomists and the Latter Prophets," in *Those Elusive Deuteronomists*, 136-138; Gomes, *The Sanctuary of Bethel and the Configuration of Israelite Identity*, 182; Hadjiev, *The Composition and Redaction of the Book of Amos*, (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2009), 46-59.

with their fellow exiles to find that the remaining Judahite populace had forsaken the ravaged cult centre in Jerusalem and re-established their worship at the northern cult centres.<sup>54</sup> This passage demonstrates that this is rebellion (פִּשְׁעוֹ), traitorous to the extreme. There is a correlation here with the rest of the anti-Benjamite material which Davies discusses, and cult-centre-envy.<sup>55</sup> The main focus of this passage is on the “rebellion” of taking money out of Judah, to give to the shrines in the north – it is not going to the north for worship in general which poses the greatest problem (although this *is* condemned elsewhere, and “worship” generally involved sacrifice or offering). That this is evidence of Dtr redactional activity in Amos is clear.<sup>56</sup> Mays outlines the nature of this tithing and worship:

The ‘tithe’, which had an ancient connection with the shrine of Bethel (Gen. 28.22), was a tenth of the annual yield of the land which the Israelite was to bring to a sanctuary and use in the festival meals before the Lord (Deut. 14.22-29). 4b may simply describe what was common practice; the *zēbah* was offered on the morning of the pilgrim’s first day at the shrine and his annual tithe presented on the third day. ‘Multiply rebellion’ in 4a may, however, govern the sense of 4b; then the time expressions are distributives: ‘Sacrifice every day; give tithes every third day’.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Philip R. Davies, “The Origin of Biblical Israel,” in *Ancient Israel in its Near Eastern Context*, edited by Yairah Amit, Ehud Ben Zvi, Israel Finkelstein and Oded Lipschits, (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 141-147. Davies argues that the religious and political supremacy of Israel was the reason that upon return from exile the Judahites chose to identify themselves with this name. “In a period of over a century, thus spanning at least four generations, the religious identity of ‘Israel’ could very easily permeate the population of ‘Benjamin-Judah’ in such a way that the later restoration of political and cultural supremacy to Jerusalem could not challenge it, let alone remove it; instead, the restored Jerusalem community sought to detach the population of Samaria from the name, while implying a rightful claim to its territory.” 145.

<sup>55</sup> As implied by Davies, “The Origin of Biblical Israel,” 141-147.

<sup>56</sup> Doorly states that “The original oracles of Amos constitute 28 percent of the canonical book of Amos... and are found meaningfully placed throughout a liturgical framework created by a Josianic scribe of the Deuteronomic circle.” *Obsession with Justice*, 121. Doorly notes the economic concerns inherent in Amos, and that these concerns align with those of Dtr. He also states that “The passionate concern of Amos was identical to that of the rural Levitical priests who preserved his oracles and carried them to Jerusalem following the destruction of the northern kingdom.” Also Kugler, “The Deuteronomists and the Latter Prophets,” 134, 136-138; *contra* Hadijev, who concludes that “There is little in Am.4.6-12 which can be successfully interpreted as bearing the marks of Dtr theology.” 160. Hadijev bases this conclusion on the difference in the mode of God’s displeasure, and the use of covenant language in Amos compared to that of Deuteronomy and the DH, 156-160.

<sup>57</sup> Mays, *Amos*, (London: SCM Press, 1978), 75.

If Mays is correct with this second supposition then this is an indication of just how heavily the Israelite population was 'taxed' by the religious hierarchy. It is likely then that the initial message of Amos is speaking out against the very hierarchy that sought to eliminate all competition for their own economic gain, although this does not preclude the possibility that this text was later adapted by Dtr or their descendants during the exile. Mays' assessment of the passage reads thus:

The shift is in effect a charge that the sacrificial cult has nothing to do with Yahweh. It is not the Lord, but the self of Israel which is the ground of their worship. The people themselves have displaced the Lord as the central reality of cult. However pious and proper all their religious acts, the sacrifices and offerings are no submission of life to the Lord, but merely an expression of their own love of religiosity.<sup>58</sup>

Andersen and Freedman have undertaken an in-depth analysis of the language in Amos 4:4-5. They note that not only does this passage appear somewhat incomplete, but that here Amos seems to be not only deviating from the standard Yahwistic practice but in those instances where he maintains it, he goes to extremes in its recommendation. So where there may have been a small amount of leaven used in the offerings, he stresses none.<sup>59</sup>

They also state that:

each of the seven lines has something missing. The only article is an integral part of the name Gilgal; the nouns in v. 5 do not have it. The connections between related words *across* poetic lines enable us to link *zbh* and *tôdâ*. The phrase *zibhe tôdâ* occurs in Ps 107:22 and 2 Chr 33:16; *zebâ tôdat še'elāmāyw* in Lev 7:13, 15; *wěhāb'û zēbāhîm wētôdôt* in 2 Chr 29:31. Similar connections between 'tithes' and 'vows' show that these are not routine tithes, but special offerings promised on the eve of some hazardous enterprise or in a crisis (Jonah 1:16). Jephthah's vow (Judg 11:31) is an example. Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek in thanksgiving for victory (Genesis 14). So it all hangs together, and it ties in with 6:13, for such vows would be fulfilled with rejoicing and thanksgiving.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Mays, *Amos*, 75-76.

<sup>59</sup> Francis I. Andersen and David Noel Freedman, *Amos: A New Translation With Introduction and Commentary*, (New York: Doubleday, 1989), 429-430.

<sup>60</sup> Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, 430.

If this were indeed the only case, it is difficult to comprehend Amos' true objection. The actions of these people correspond to everything that the Deuteronomistic school would desire. Amos takes particular exception to the places of cultic worship in the northern kingdom – Bethel, Gilgal, Samaria, with the majority of his negative focus on Bethel. Andersen and Freedman point out that “This cult center (Bethel) is mentioned by Amos more often (seven times – 3:14; 4:4; 5:5,6; 7:10, 13) than any other place in Israel – Samaria (3:9; 12; 4:1; 6:1; 8:14), Gilgal (4:4; 5:5), or Dan (8:14). In Judah Beersheba is the only place mentioned (5:5, 8:14) besides Zion.”<sup>61</sup> Andersen and Freedman go on to argue that these instances in Amos were most likely targeted at specific events which are sadly now lost to us. This particular oracle was directed at corruption in the priesthood, and it is therefore unclear whether it is, or is not, an objection to worship at shrines in itself.<sup>62</sup>

A rather substantial reference to the importance of tithing and the mechanism thereof is made in Nehemiah 10:33-40, which is a large passage that addresses a wide variety of financial matters. While it is post-exilic in nature, its value for a study of pre-exilic reform is in detailing the way such reforms were treated in hindsight. From a financial perspective, this passage implies that ninety percent of the tithes are to remain in the possession of the Levites. Nehemiah 10:39 reads:

An Aaronite priest must be with the Levites when they collect the tithe, and the Levites must bring up a tithe of the tithe to the House of our god, to the storerooms of the treasury.

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<sup>61</sup> Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, 430. Gomes notes that “Amos’s socio-ethical polemic is inextricably linked to his polemic against Bethel, a scenario that best fits the latifundialising [*sic*] context of the eighth century.” Gomes, *The Sanctuary of Bethel*, 143.

<sup>62</sup> Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, 434-435. Gomes agrees with this assessment, noting the stress on the extravagant lifestyles of the people of Bethel and the likelihood that the growing system of *latifundia* saw an increase in the oppression of the poor. There may be a slight Dtr redaction in these passages, but Gomes sees the likelihood that the passages, as they were, served Dtr’s purposes (although they do not condemn the worship of idols or other deities) and that Dtr therefore left them primarily untouched. Gomes, *The Sanctuary of Bethel*, 181-182.

This “tithe of the tithe” would imply that the Levites were obliged to collect one hundred percent of tithes from the people, functioning as tax collectors, and that they were obligated to surrender ten percent of this to the Temple, which the Aaronid priest would ensure via their supervision of the process. The receiver of the remaining ninety percent is not specified. By implication it must have remained in the possession of the Levite.<sup>63</sup> By this reckoning, only ten percent make it to the Temple. Although Nehemiah is a post-exilic text, it is a reflection of the ‘end product’ of the Deuteronomistic reform and reveals the impact that Deuteronomistic theology had on later generations.<sup>64</sup> What is being reinforced by Nehemiah in this passage is a way of life that promotes the wealth of a certain group, and also supports the notion that the Levites functioned as tax collectors.<sup>65</sup> However, it cannot necessarily be concluded that this is to the detriment of the people, as there is no direct evidence to support such a conclusion and there is no biblical record of a general outcry against oppression by the priestly groups during this time. Rather, what is taken here appears to be a smaller tax, a small portion of which benefits the community so that there will be no outcry, but the larger part of which is stealthily put away for the private ‘pay’ of the Levites.<sup>66</sup> It is implied that these tithes were substantial enough that a mere tenth of them were adequate for the direct purposes of the Temple. A precedent for a sanctuary tax is also present in Exodus 30:11-16. As demonstrated by Dandamaev, in the Persian era the

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<sup>63</sup> This is also noted by Baesens, “Royal Taxation and Religious Tribute in Hellenistic Palestine,” 188.

<sup>64</sup> Blenkinsopp notes the final success of a centralised system of tithing “by the Roman period and possibly earlier.” Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Ezra-Nehemiah. A Commentary*, (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1988), 318. Lohfink notes of movements that if they are not successful, they dwindle into nothing. Lohfink, “Was There a Deuteronomistic Movement?,” in *Those Elusive Deuteronomists*, 45. The continuation of Dtr’s reforms in the post-exilic period suggest that they can be to some extent classified as a movement.

<sup>65</sup> Claburn, “Fiscal Basis,” 18; K.L. Noll, *Canaan and Israel in Antiquity: An Introduction*, (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 266; van der Toorn, *Scribal Culture and the Making of the Hebrew Bible*, 90-91.

<sup>66</sup> Although before the time of Dtr, and therefore before the instigation of this particular system, a hint of dissatisfaction is revealed in Amos 2:6. That this verse is actually an objection to the return of debt slaves to their masters, and therefore to the phenomenon of debt slavery itself, is discussed by Avi Shveka, “‘For a Pair of Shoes’: A New Light on an Obscure Verse in Amos’ Prophecy,” *VT* 62 (2012), 95-114.

Israelite economy developed a cash component and so temple tax was received in cash as well as in kind.<sup>67</sup> It appears from the alterations of the laws in Deuteronomy that this may have been available in some form regarding tithing in the time before the exile. However, this raises some significant questions: is this a 'precedent' or is it added by a later Dtr redactor? If it is original to the text (it is reasonable to presume that there was always some sort of sanctuary tax),<sup>68</sup> is it possible to know to what extent it has been altered? The change in the tithe amounts in Nehemiah 10:30-40 and in Exodus can be accounted for in the difference between the Persian value of a shekel and the Israelite sacred shekel value. Myers states that "The shift from a half to a third shekel may be explained by the fact that the Persian monetary system was based on ten silver shekels for one gold shekel, whereas the sacred shekel was in the proportion of fifteen to one."<sup>69</sup>

The usage of such taxes and their ultimate destinations are elaborated in Nehemiah 12:44-45, which reads:

At that time men were appointed over the chambers that served as treasuries for the gifts, the first fruits, and the tithes, into which the portions prescribed by the Teaching for the priests and Levites were gathered from the fields of the towns; for the people of Judah were grateful to the priests and Levites who were in attendance, who kept the charge of their God and the gatekeepers [serving] in accord with the ordinance of David and Solomon his son...

It is noteworthy that this passage links tithing not only with the happiness of the people, but also with the history of the people. This text is demonstrating that the priests and Levites are blessed, and a joy to the people because they perform ancient ceremonies which keep

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<sup>67</sup> Dandamaev, "State and Temple in Babylonia in the First Millennium B.C.," in *State and Temple Economy in the Ancient Near East*, edited by Edward Lipiński, (Leuven: Departement Oriëntalistiek, 1979), 593; Stevens, *Temples, Tithes and Taxes*, 107; Ira Spar and Michael Jursa, *Cuneiform Texts in the Metropolitan Museum of Art IV. The Ebabbar Temple Archive and Other Texts from the Fourth to the First Millennium B.C.*, (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2014), iv.

<sup>68</sup> As is demonstrated in Stevens, *Temples, Tithes and Taxes*, 93-120.

<sup>69</sup> Jacob M. Myers, *Ezra. Nehemiah. The Anchor Bible*, (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1965), 179.

the people of Judah in favour with YHWH. Therefore it is a pleasure for the people to be donating so many of their resources to them. The post-exilic nature of this text could also reflect a national reassurance that all is well now that the cult and its functionaries are in recovery after the return from exile. The worry about a similar future calamity is assuaged because the religion has regained its stability. Nehemiah later expresses anger about the misappropriation of the portions for the priests, Levites, singers and gatekeepers (Neh. 13:4-9). This may be an objection to outright embezzlement by the priestly hierarchy. Myers has noted that Nehemiah specifies YHWH as the deity in this text,<sup>70</sup> implying that the author acknowledged the possibility of other gods, or the possibility of confusion with other gods. If this were not the case, it would simply not be necessary to specify, and the term אלהים would suffice in all situations. Therefore, the author of Nehemiah would have understood the possibility of this confusion, especially when the Israelite penchant for avoiding the name of YHWH became such an issue in later theology. Myers has provided an unusual assessment of the emphasis placed on the tithes in this passage. His first comment is that “it (the passage) presents an idealistic picture expressing the hope and aim of the writer.”<sup>71</sup> This is preceded by the comment that “Most commentators think it has been placed here in anticipation of the unfavourable impressions made by the episodes related in the following chapter.”<sup>72</sup> The first stipulation seems plausible, that there are ulterior motives at work. Myers does acknowledge the very heavy stress in the passage that is placed on praising the Levites: “the praiseworthy conduct of the Levites in the performance of their responsibilities in the cult. Indeed, this looks like the main point of the section, growing out of the joyous

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<sup>70</sup> Myers, *Ezra. Nehemiah*, 206.

<sup>71</sup> Myers, *Ezra. Nehemiah*, 206.

<sup>72</sup> Myers, *Ezra. Nehemiah*, 206.

observation in vss. 42b-43.”<sup>73</sup> Regarding tithes, Myers is not very explicit. He mentions merely that, “The smooth functioning of the ecclesiastical system visualized by the writer is further illustrated by the Levites’ meticulous observance of the law of tithes (Num xviii 28; Neh x 38b).”<sup>74</sup> Given the close ties between Dtr and the Levites, it becomes necessary to establish exactly *why* the Levites and Dtr were paying such close observance to the laws governing tithing, when such stress is not placed on any other law they were interested in upholding (such as those regarding sacrifice or the judiciary). The constant reference back to such tithes as due to the Levites serves to reinforce any bond that is conceivable between them and Dtr.

#### **IV.vi. Conclusion**

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It can be concluded that tithes were an integral part of life in ancient Israel and Judah, just as taxes are today. This is evident through their permeation of the biblical texts. It is highly likely that a system of tithing of some sort operated throughout the entire wider region from the earliest times.<sup>75</sup> The primary concern for Dtr was the manner in which these tithes were directed. This accounts for the heavy emphasis on tithing in the texts attributed to Dtr. The emphatic nature of many of the texts discussed above leads to the conclusion that while Dtr may not have had a purely economic rationale for their reforms, economics played a major part in them; almost every aspect of their reforms leads to an economic gain. They altered the sacrificial and judicial laws to enable more revenue to flow into the central sanctuary, and they legislated to provide for the economically disadvantaged of the

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<sup>73</sup> Myers, *Ezra. Nehemiah*, 207.

<sup>74</sup> Myers, *Ezra. Nehemiah*, 207.

<sup>75</sup> As is noted by Claburn, “Fiscal Basis,” 14, n.5.

community into which they grouped members of their own faction. It may have been the case, as has been noted by such scholars as Mayes and Claburn,<sup>76</sup> that Dtr's reforms had an economically detrimental effect on the Levitical priesthood in Jerusalem to begin with. In order to compensate, Dtr then worked into their reforms 'fixes', which ensured the revenue flow that the Levites were depending upon from the outset.<sup>77</sup>

It is evident that centralisation of sacrifice and judiciary led to a greater increase in revenue flow into Jerusalem from tithes and other sources. In legislating against *bāmôth* and other places of worship, Dtr established a working system which enabled them to secure control of the economy, the cult, and its associated bureaucracy. Such control ensured an exponential increase in profits while decreasing national cultic overhead. These reforms were justified by the need to reform the national religion by centralising worship in the Jerusalem Temple, and establishing a stable monolatry to the god YHWH. An added benefit of the reforms saw an increase in the Temple complex's ability to function as a financial institution, leaving the people with the choice between Temple finance and potentially unscrupulous money lending families. To compensate for the difficulties caused by this shift, and in an effort to curtail some of the exploitation that could arise from such a situation, Dtr also attempted to place cultic restrictions on the charging of interest.

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<sup>76</sup> Mayes, *Deuteronomy*, 106-107; Claburn, "Fiscal Basis," 18; Blenkinsopp, "Deuteronomy," 103.

<sup>77</sup> Such as the alterations to the systems of judiciary and tax collection, which enabled the Levites to take an active and profitable part in the bureaucracy without the need for officiating in cultic matters.

## V. Aniconism.

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You shalt not make for yourself a sculpted image, any likeness of what is in the heavens above, or on the earth below, or in the waters below the earth. You shall not bow down to them or serve them. (Deut. 5:8-9a).

The essence of the Deuteronomistic aniconistic policy is summed up in these words. It is forbidden to create an image of a deity, whether anthropomorphic or theriomorphic. Thus, the bull statues of Jeroboam are particularly offensive (1 Kings 12:28-30).<sup>1</sup> According to the central chapter Deuteronomy 12, this extends to items and symbols directly representing the deity or paraphernalia for the deity's use:

Tear down their altars, smash their pillars (מצבת), put their sacred posts (אשרים) to the fire, and cut down the images (פסילים) of their gods, obliterating their name from that site. (Deut. 12:3).<sup>2</sup>

What follows in this chapter will be an exposition of some of the arguments surrounding the development from an iconistic cult in ancient Israel, through an iconoclastic period and considerable development, into what can be considered a transcendent aniconism.<sup>3</sup> This change was driven in part by political and economic rhetoric just as much as it was by religious motivation.

Aniconism is a term common to studies in the Deuteronomistic History, primarily because of the iconoclastic basis of Dtr's reforms. Mettinger provides clear and thorough descriptions of the different types of aniconism which will be adopted throughout this

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<sup>1</sup> It is also noteworthy that Jeroboam's 'sin' is immediately followed by the establishment of cult places and the appointment of "priests from the ranks of the people who were not of Levite descent." (1 Kings 12:31).

<sup>2</sup> While this refers initially to the gods of other nations, Dtr paint all places of worship outside of the Jerusalem Temple as illicit, and thus this classification is also applied to Yahwistic shrines and sanctuaries as well. Deut. 16:21-22 also reads: "You shall not set up a sacred post – any kind of pole beside the altar of the Lord your God that you may make – or erect a stone pillar; for such the Lord your God detests."

<sup>3</sup> Ronald S. Hendel, "Aniconism and Anthropomorphism in Ancient Israel," in *The Image and the Book, Iconic Cults, Aniconism and the Rise of Book Religion in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, edited by Karel van der Toorn, (Leuven: Uitgeverij Peeters, 1997), 206-12.

chapter.<sup>4</sup> Firstly, Mettinger argues that all forms of aniconism eschew anthropomorphic and theriomorphic form. All cultic practice which has a statue of the deity explicitly, whether in anthropomorphic or theriomorphic form or a combination thereof can be defined as iconistic. Furthermore, Mettinger determines that there are general aniconism/s, which could have involved a throne for the invisible deity, *maššeboth*, or other artefacts which represented the deity without providing an explicit physical form; and empty-space aniconism, in which the presence of the deity is marked by a sacred emptiness. He further divides aniconism into *de facto* and *programmatic* classifications. The former is an attitude where the worshippers have an aniconistic cult and recognise that this may not always be or have been the case, or might not be the case for other peoples, and are generally indifferent to iconography (this could also be considered ‘tolerant’ aniconism), whereas the latter is proscriptive, intolerant, iconophobic, and often has an iconoclastic component.<sup>5</sup> It is clear that the biblical account of the Deuteronomistic reform contains many, if not all, of the elements of programmatic aniconism. The extent to which ancient Israel was aniconistic before this reformation, however, is a topic of great debate.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Tryggve Mettinger, *No Graven Image? Israelite Aniconism in Its Near Eastern Context*, (Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell International, 1995), 13-38. That this definition is not watertight however is noted by Izak Cornelius, “The Many Faces of God: Divine Images and Symbols in Ancient Near Eastern Religions,” in *The Image and the Book*, 21-22. Cornelius notes that while Mettinger considers symbols as part of aniconic practice, these may have served as abbreviated forms of the iconography of the deity. That aniconism and iconoclasm are two different terms is also stressed by Cornelius. An aniconic cult does not necessarily engage in the active repudiation and destruction of images. They will be considered as such throughout this thesis.

<sup>5</sup> This definition of aniconism is laid out in great detail in the Introduction to Mettinger’s *No Graven Image*, 13-38. He supplements his definition/s with convenient tables, for example pages 18 and 22. A very brief summary of his definition can be found in his “A Conversation with My Critics: Cult Image or Aniconism in the First Temple?,” in *Essays on Ancient Israel in its Near Eastern Context. A Tribute to Nadav Na’aman*, edited by Yairah Amit, Ehud Ben Zvi, Israel Finkelstein and Oded Lipschits, (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 275-276.

<sup>6</sup> As has been outlined by Herbert Niehr, “‘Israelite’ Religion and ‘Canaanite’ Religion,” in *Religious Diversity in Ancient Israel and Judah*, edited by Francesca Stavrakopoulou and John Barton, (London: T&T Clark, 2010), 23-36; Mettinger has argued for a passive form of aniconism which he terms ‘tolerant aniconism’, at least as it regards worship of YHWH. Mettinger, “A Conversation with My Critics,” 273-296, “Israelite Aniconism: Developments and Origins,” in *The Image and the Book*, 173-204, and *No Graven Image*; Miller agrees with

Iconistic practice is something that the western world has often observed, and attempted to separate itself from. The basis of this originates with the biblical texts and early rabbinic thought (based on the biblical texts). It has permeated Christian thought via the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth and Paul of Tarsus, both steeped in this early rabbinic thought. Consequently, a belief has developed over the last two thousand years that iconic practices are somehow an aberration, based on a mistaken notion that the physical object is somehow either connected or not connected to the spiritual subject, and that this is a very primitive and simplistic view. However, this viewpoint is based upon western thought's tendency towards dualism.<sup>7</sup> There are several biblical passages which on the surface could be considered to contradict this point. Take for example Psalm 135:15-18.<sup>8</sup> If it can be considered that the paradigm of the ANE was based on a much more holistic, far less dualistic view than that of today - one which saw no difficulty in equating idol with subject - then this is not contradicted by Ps. 135.

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Mettinger's position, Patrick D. Miller, *The Religion of Ancient Israel*, (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000), 15-23; *contra* Becking, who argues that the development of a purely aniconistic cult in Judah did not eventuate until late in the monarchy, Bob Becking, "The Gods in Whom They Trusted... Assyrian Evidence for Iconic Polytheism in Ancient Israel?," in *Only One God? Monotheism in Ancient Israel and the Veneration of the Goddess Asherah*, edited by Meindert Dijkstra, Bob Becking, Mario C.A. Korpel and Karel J.H. Vriezen, (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 151-163.

<sup>7</sup> For the purpose of this study a fairly simple definition of dualism will be employed. Dualism is defined here as: the separation of the physical and the spiritual in thought and/or action. Dualism itself is a many-faceted and complex topic which deserves closer attention than this study is able to provide it with. A discussion of this is undertaken by Levtow, *Images of Others. Iconic Politics in Ancient Israel*, (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2008), 6-12. Levtow states that "The extreme dualism embedded in the modern European world view is often understood as a 'natural' and universally applicable classification of reality. It has frequently been projected onto cultures to which it does not apply." <sup>7</sup> He describes such an understanding as "anachronous" for the ancient world, including ancient Israel, 4, and continues to note that the very term "religion" is a manufactured one used to separate that area of thought from other aspects of life. It does not once appear in the Bible, 21-22; Francesca Stavrakopoulou, "'Popular' Religion and 'Official' Religion," in *Religious Diversity in Ancient Israel and Judah*, edited by Francesca Stavrakopoulou and John Barton, (London: T&T Clark, 2010), 40.

<sup>8</sup> Levtow refers to these texts as "reconfigure(ing) social power relations by repositioning points along the ancient West Asian ritual and mythic continuum." *Images of Others*, 75. The issue of this psalm will be raised again later in this chapter.

Aniconism is a means by which Dtr were more easily able to enforce cultic centralisation. Centralisation was their goal, and along with monopoly over the cult came money and power in the form of appropriated resources from sequestered sanctuaries and increased revenue from incoming tithes and income generated from interest on loans.<sup>9</sup> Evans has argued that aniconistic policy preceded aniconistic theology, the latter of which served to justify the former.<sup>10</sup> Iconography itself posed no great threat to the YHWH-alone movement or to the cult of YHWH in general, but stood in the way of a consolidation of power and monetary gain. An iconoclastic drive with the support of King Josiah ensured that re-establishing a shrine became too great a risk. The re-interpretation of the concept of the slaughter of meat in Deuteronomy 12:20-21 gave the people more leeway to go about their daily business without the presence of *bāmôth* “on every high hill and under every leafy tree” (1 Kings 14: 23). Aniconism is a mechanism by which the goal of centralisation was achieved.

It is clear that at some stage iconography in general, and of YHWH and Asherah in particular, was condemned in Judah if not also in Israel. The exact origin and date of this condemnation is unknown, although scholars have posited many theories offering speculation on these points. For example, Lang has pinpointed the anti-iconic polemic inherent in the YHWH-alone movement as having its very beginnings in the 9<sup>th</sup> century BCE,

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<sup>9</sup> As has been discussed above in chapter 3, in eliminating rival places of worship Dtr were not only freeing themselves of cultic competition, but also of rival financial institutions. The Jerusalem Temple became the only banking institution in Judah and Israel apart from the wealthy families and smaller interpersonal loans. An analysis of the function of the Temple in this way is undertaken by Marty E. Stevens, *Temples, Tithes and Taxes. The Temple and the Economic Life of Ancient Israel*, (Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 2006), in particular chapter 6, “Temple as Bank”, 136-166.

<sup>10</sup> Carl D. Evans, “Cult Images, Royal Policies and the Origins of Aniconism,” in *The Pitcher is Broken. Memorial Essays for Gösta W. Ahlström*, edited by Steven W. Holloway and Lowell K. Handy, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 209-210.

and its formulated ideological roots in the Hezekian reforms.<sup>11</sup> This involved the condemnation of any iconography representing the deity, including the tauromorph imagery.<sup>12</sup> According to 2 Kings 18:4 Hezekiah was responsible for the destruction of the snake statue Nehushtan from the Temple, to which the people are recorded as having offered sacrifices.<sup>13</sup> However, Lang cites the worship of the serpent statue in the Temple as an example of either the confusion of the symbol with the deity, or the perception of it in this way as directly related to YHWH, when other factors would indicate that the serpent was directly related to the worship of Asherah, who is included in the official worship of the deity YHWH.<sup>14</sup> It does not logically follow that because something was attributed to Moses, it necessarily pertains directly to the worship of YHWH.<sup>15</sup> Although Moses is often associated with the cult of YHWH as it came out of Midian,<sup>16</sup> this does not preclude the likelihood that Asherah, and indeed potentially other deities, were also worshipped by the early Israelites and even the Midianites at that time in conjunction with YHWH. An Aniconistic monotheism had yet to develop.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Bernhard Lang, "No God but Yahweh! The Origin and Character of Biblical Monotheism," in *Monotheism*, edited by Claude Geffre and Jean-Pierre Jossua, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1985), 41-49. He argues that it was during the reign of Hezekiah that the YHWH-alone movement really made its first appearance in Judah, 43.

<sup>12</sup> Lang states that "Obviously iconoclasm was part of the programme of the Yahweh-alone movement, and people began to follow it, though perhaps only in times of need." Lang, "No God but Yahweh!," 44.

<sup>13</sup> The legitimacy of Nehushtan is implied by Numbers 21:8-9.

<sup>14</sup> Bernhard Lang, *Monotheism and the Prophetic Minority: An Essay in Biblical History and Sociology*, (Sheffield: The Almond Press, 1983), 36-38; An argument that Nehushtan represented Asherah is forwarded by Saul M. Olyan, *Asherah and the Cult of Yahweh in Israel*, (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), 70-71; *contra* Hendel, who believes that Nehushtan was representative of YHWH's healing powers, especially from the venom of serpents. R. Hendel, "Nehushtan," in *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, edited by Karel van der Toorn, Bob Becking and Pieter W. van der Horst, (New York: E.J. Brill, 1995), 1157-1160.

<sup>15</sup> Lang, *Monotheism and the Prophetic Minority*, 36-38.

<sup>16</sup> As is posited in Lemaire, *The Birth of Monotheism. The Rise and Disappearance of Yahwism*, (Washington: Biblical Archaeological Society, 2007), 19-28; Mark S. Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism, Israel's Polytheistic Background and the Ugaritic Texts*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 140.

<sup>17</sup> Lemaire states that "Early Yahwism seems not to have been monotheistic, as it recognized the existence of other gods, but it does seem to have been monolatrous, as the clan of Moses worshipped no other god. Like other cults dedicated to the 'god of the father,' early Yahwism apparently consisted of worship within the framework of a sanctuary with an altar, a stela and a sacred bush." Lemaire, *The Birth of Monotheism*, 28.

Examples of the conflation of a deity with its cult statue or symbol can be found throughout the Ancient Near East, and the shadow of it also in the biblical texts. Such a perception permeated every facet of life and became integrated with popular theology.<sup>18</sup> It is a common eventuality that such conflations occur, as humanity is proficient in imbuing items with greater meaning.<sup>19</sup> Becking links an interpretation of Jeremiah 31:21-2 with the Persian policy of returning the images of their captured people's deities upon their release. His analysis implies that as the exiles will return home so will their deity, presumably represented iconographically.<sup>20</sup> In support of this he cites Nahum 2:3[2] "as an expression of hope that YHWH will return with his people from exile."<sup>21</sup> He also cites several passages from Deutero-Isaiah, namely 40:3; 42:16; 43:19; 49:9 and 11; 57:14, and also Ezek 43:1-11 which refers to the return of the כבוד יהוה,<sup>22</sup> 'the glory of the Lord,' to which he states that:

It can safely be concluded that the theme 'return of the deity' was not just a literary *topos* in ancient Mesopotamia but also a reality. Divine images were returned to the sanctuaries from which they were deported. The carrying away of images into exile

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Mettinger agrees, Mettinger, "A Conversation with My Critics," 273-291; Dever, *Did God Have a Wife? Archaeology and Folk Religion in Ancient Israel*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2005), 252-303. Dever provides an analysis of the transition from polytheism to monotheism in ancient Israel. He begins by acknowledging that polytheism persisted at the very least until late in the monarchy, if not well into the exile, 252.

<sup>18</sup> Glenn S. Holland, *Gods in the Desert. Religions of the Ancient Near East*, (Plymouth: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2009), 229-230; Michael B. Hundley, *Gods in Dwellings. Temples and Divine Presence in the Ancient Near East*, (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2013), 214-239.

<sup>19</sup> Webb Keane, "Signs Are Not The Garb Of Meaning: On the Social Analysis of Material Things," in *Materiality*, edited by Daniel Miller, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 190; Colin Renfrew, *The Archaeology of Cult: The Sanctuary at Phylakopi*, (London: The British School of Archaeology at Athens, 1985), 18; Lynn Meskell, "Objects in the Mirror Appear Closer Than They Are," in *Materiality*, 53-58. Meskell observes that "Peoples often confer enormous respect upon fabricated things." 53.

<sup>20</sup> Mettinger argues that for the Deuteronomist YHWH "relocated to Heaven" during the exile, thus solving the problem of the loss of the Temple. Mettinger, "Cultic Image or Aniconism", 274. If this is so it is a demonstration of the heavy influence of Babylonian theology on Dtr at an early stage.

<sup>21</sup> Becking, "The Return of the Deity: Iconic or Aniconic?," in *Ancient Israel in its Near Eastern Context*, 56.

<sup>22</sup> That the כבוד itself also functions as an icon depends on the level to which metaphor is applied to the statement. Given the degree of decoration often accorded cult statues, there could easily be a literal component to phrases that allude to gazing on the glory of the Lord or the face of the Lord. A brief discussion of this is undertaken by Herbert Niehr, "In Search of YHWH's Cult Statue in the First Temple," in *The Image and the Book*, 83-85.

was represented iconographically... but no representations of the return of images is known.<sup>23</sup>

This reticence to artistically depict the *return* of images is understandable from both an Israelite or Judahite and Assyrian or Babylonian perspective - the victorious would want to depict their triumph, especially over the gods of the enemy, but are not proud of having had to release the people again, while the returnees are likely to experience a sense of shame over the incident and be even less likely to want to produce art depicting it. Although such an incident is not entirely without precedent, the biblical record itself attests to the return of captives and in some way, as Becking is arguing, of their god, making it clear that they were not so proud as to want to conceal the incident entirely, although it is not known for certain that Dtr had ulterior motives for such historiography.<sup>24</sup> To this end Smith also affirms that

biblical claims of monotheism are generally rhetorical. Israelites continued to worship deities other than Yahweh both before and possibly after the exile. We may assume on the basis of available evidence that the ruling priestly groups of the post-exilic theocracy maintained a Yahwistic monolatry expressed in its rhetoric of monotheism, but such a historical conclusion does not justify claims for an entirely 'monotheistic culture'.<sup>25</sup>

Such rhetoric formed the basis of the YHWH-alone movement which went on to characterize the post-exilic cult and, later, Judaism. Becking's argument is compelling, and is an indication that the full success of the aniconistic movement can be placed at a date *after* the exile, given Smith's claim that there is evidence of polytheistic practice up to, if not throughout, this time.

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<sup>23</sup> Becking, "The Return of the Deity: Iconic or Aniconic?," 56. Mettinger disagrees, citing the כבוד theology as a Priestly construct. Mettinger, "Cult Image or Aniconism in the First Temple?," 274.

<sup>24</sup> Becking, "The Return of the Deity: Iconic or Aniconic?," 55-6.

<sup>25</sup> Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism*, 154.

Becking argues that while ‘official’ Yahwism was aniconistic, once out of the upper social strata this was clearly not the case – as there is ample evidence throughout the biblical texts attesting to the veneration of the goddess.<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, “The theme of the return of the divine image could be an important argument for iconism in ancient Israel.”<sup>27</sup> In this instance, YHWH is represented almost exclusively by the Temple vessels, but Becking also points out that our modern concept of aniconism (and God) derives from our enlightenment definitions, and would have been considerably different for ancient peoples.

It is my conviction that for the ancients the real abode of the deity was in heaven. The earthly figure, whether a *šalmu*, a מצבה, the כבוד, or an empty space, was a representation that was construed as real and tangible. It could be seen,... touched, and even kissed (Hos 13:2).<sup>28</sup>

However, this does not consider Mettinger’s argument that during the late monarchy Judah went through a period of *de facto* aniconism. Cultic paraphernalia, including the Ark, would have been present to facilitate the needs of the invisible deity.<sup>29</sup> Nor does it consider the presence of such ‘idols’ as Nehushtan in the Temple as indication of an iconistic component to ‘official’ Yahwism. Becking argues that during the exile YHWH was no longer present in the land for the remaining population (which he considers quite substantial), just as the highest social strata was no longer present. He cites the return of the deity with the return of the Temple vessels as evidence of this.<sup>30</sup> As for the premise that the upper social strata were primarily monotheistic, this is contradicted by the biblical texts themselves. For

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<sup>26</sup> Becking, “The Return of the Deity: Iconic or Aniconic?,” 56-8. This depends on one’s definition of aniconic. There are only a small number of anthropomorphic representations available from Israel, and these are all of goddesses. YHWH appears to have been primarily represented aniconistically or, in very rare instances such as Bethel, Ashkelon and Dothan, theriomorphically, Hess, *Israelite Religions*, 157 and 234 respectively for brief overviews of these last two findings. YHWH worship might have been in some ways or places aniconistic, but of the *de facto* tolerant variety rather than the programmatic iconoclastic variety into which it developed.

<sup>27</sup> Becking, “The Return of the Deity: Iconic or Aniconic?,” 57.

<sup>28</sup> Becking, “The Return of the Deity: Iconic or Aniconic?,” 57-58.

<sup>29</sup> Mettinger, “Cult Image or Aniconism in the First Temple?,” 275.

<sup>30</sup> Becking, “The Return of the Deity: Iconic or Aniconic?,” 58.

example, Dtr demonstrate that many of the kings of both Judah and Israel did not adopt the terms of the Deuteronomistic reform and continued in iconic, possibly polytheistic practices. The case of Jezebel and her prophets in 1 Kings 18 is an example of this. Any support of the shrines and high places by the monarchy is also indicative of polytheistic, and certainly iconic tendencies, as *maššeboth* and *asherim* were often situated in *bāmôth* together. The concern with the notion of a monotheistic hierarchy in ancient Israel is that simply because something is officially condemned in the biblical texts (in this case polytheism), it does not necessarily follow that it was historically reprobated.

The constant repetition of the condemnation of these things alone (in this case iconographical elements) would suggest that it was considered a widespread ‘problem’ by the condemnatory group (in this case, Dtr).<sup>31</sup> There is ample evidence in the biblical texts to indicate the presence of iconistic (and possibly polytheistic) Yahwism in the officially sanctioned state cult – Temple, priests, and royal family. While this depends on one’s definition of aniconism – whether it is considered as any iconography whatsoever (such as an empty throne or *maššeba*), or whether it is limited to anthropomorphic or theriomorphic representations of the deity – it is possible to find examples of the majority of these in relation to YHWH in the biblical texts with the exception of direct physical anthropomorphic representation. It can also be argued that statements such as that of Jeroboam in 1 Kings 12:28 that “This is your god, O Israel” are metaphorical statements rather than literal ones, but the symbol always points to the focus thereof, and in the minds of the people the line

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<sup>31</sup> The second commandment is explicit in its insistence that images are abhorrent to the Lord (Deut. 5:8-9), and the kings are assessed by their efficacy in doing away with such ‘abominations’ (for example the assessment of Jehoram in 2 Kings 3:1-4). That the kings are constantly accused of either promoting or condemning such practices in itself speaks volumes about their profligacy.

between the two is very blurred.<sup>32</sup> Mettinger has approached this concept from a purely logical perspective, thus failing to take into consideration simple human behaviour. He describes the statement of Jeroboam as comparative to that of the Philistines when the ark appeared: “If we argue that the bull in the proclamation of Jeroboam at Bethel must be understood as a direct theriomorphic manifestation of the deity, the Philistines must, by analogy, have seen the ark as a direct representation of YHWH in the shape of a box!”<sup>33</sup> However, these two examples refer to different social situations and therefore very different contexts in the minds of the observers. Not only that, but an army on the edge of defeat could very conceivably see the god of their victors either as the box itself or as an ‘invisible’ (but very tangible) force riding on top thereof. There remains a *perception* of the deity, even if an image is not directly displayed. Furthermore, Becking demonstrates that such speech regarding a deity cannot be considered in a purely metaphysical sense, as examples of this from the ANE of this period clearly imply that the deities were somehow implicitly bound up with their iconography.<sup>34</sup>

At the conclusion of his chapter on the ‘Iconic Book’, in which he discusses the supplantation of formal iconography for the Torah in ancient Israel, Karel van der Toorn poses the notion that the real motivation behind the switch from a widespread iconic cult to a centralised aniconistic monotheism resulted ultimately in a “position of religious

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<sup>32</sup> The argument in chapter 3 that this statement is a ritual one with its origins in cultic prehistory notwithstanding.

<sup>33</sup> Mettinger, “Cult Image and Aniconism,” 280.

<sup>34</sup> For example, Becking’s discussion on the Nimrud Prism in “The Gods in Whom They Trusted... Assyrian Evidence for Iconic Polytheism in Ancient Israel,” in *Only One God?*, 156-9. This is also briefly discussed by Lemaire, *The Birth of Monotheism*, 63-74, who states that “It is not a question of representing the divinity itself but of symbolizing its invisible presence in the temple by representing its support”. 73.

monopoly.”<sup>35</sup> Literacy and the distribution of written materials was restricted to the scribal groups in the ANE, and these were located at the temples. Thus, instead of the written word disseminating knowledge of cult, this replacement of idol for book only resulted in restricting it further.<sup>36</sup> Given the distribution of places of worship at which such texts could be preserved, the notion of centralisation also serves to centralise knowledge (and thus also power) with the hierarchy at the Jerusalem Temple. Such power to control also entails power to tax. The ‘religious monopoly’ of which van der Toorn speaks is in every sense of the word also an economic one. The exact mechanism of such a monopoly, comprising the exclusive cultic ‘trading’ rights of the Jerusalem Temple complex, have already been discussed in previous chapters and do not need to be reiterated here. Suffice to say that as the scribal groups retreated into a central location, so too did the understanding of bookkeeping, legal documents, and other financial records.<sup>37</sup>

In the development of a centralised aniconistic ideology it was necessary for the reforming party to promote a rhetoric which set worshippers of the centralised cult of YHWH apart from those who conducted their cultic affairs at other sanctuaries, whether Yahwistic or not. Such a rhetoric took as its basic form the distinction between ‘Israelite’ and ‘Canaanite’. To this effect Davies argues that the name ‘Israel’ is firstly a religious one, not a

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<sup>35</sup> K. van der Toorn, “The Iconic Book: Analogies Between the Babylonian Cult of Images and the Veneration of the Torah,” in *The Image and the Book*, 247-8. “The two aspects of the Deuteronomistic reform resulted in a monopoly of religious power: the Jerusalem clergy had strengthened its position at the cost of the local priests. Sanctuaries outside Jerusalem were destroyed and abandoned, and in the absence of images cult practice declined. The temple in Jerusalem, with the cult of the Book of the Law, remained the only legitimate place of worship.”

<sup>36</sup> van der Toorn, “The Iconic Book”, 247-8. van der Toorn notes that “one wonders about the motives behind the Deuteronomistic anti-iconism: was it really a desire to promote a loftier form of religion, or mainly a way of establishing a position of religious monopoly?,” 148.

<sup>37</sup> As detailed in Hans J. Nissen, Peter Damerow and Robert K. Englund, *Ancient Bookkeeping. Writing and Techniques of Economic Administration in the Ancient Near East*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1993), 105.

political one (stemming from the children of Jacob associated with the cultic site at Bethel),<sup>38</sup> and secondly that during the neo-Babylonian period this term naturally filtered down from the Benjamite areas into Judah, where the Judahite population adopted it as their own religious identity as well.<sup>39</sup> This theory has its merits – for example, there is a significant northern theme to the Deuteronomistic literature, along with considerable anti-Benjamite sentiment.<sup>40</sup> Levtow's theories are also valuable in stressing that all ancient peoples considered themselves in terms which were at the same time religious *and* political.<sup>41</sup> There was no separation in any of these areas, which implies that identification of the term 'Israel' as religious *at the same time* identifies it as political. While the adoption of the term 'Israel' may have indeed been a later invention of the biblical authors or their precursors, it is still a product of the modern mindset that makes these distinctions between politics and religion.

The concept of the 'Canaanite' is therefore a rhetorical tool by which the developing iconographic apostasies were revealed and reviled. The existence of

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<sup>38</sup> Gen. 28:16-19.

<sup>39</sup> Davies, "The Origin of Biblical Israel," in *Essays on Ancient Israel in its Near Eastern Context*, 143-147. In distinguishing between 'religious' and 'political' Davies intends to highlight the rhetorical nature of the terms 'Israelite' and 'Canaanite' over the political identification of the term 'Israel' as a nation in the sense that it was a national descriptor for a group of people in the international political sphere. The concept of 'Israel' was religious rhetoric designed to set apart the followers of the YHWH-alone movement. Lemche too notes the 'religious' nature of the terms 'Canaanite' and 'Israelite', although he maintains that the 'Israelites' were later émigrés to the land. He states that "the Deuteronomists created the opposition to Canaanite religion, in that they identified the fertility religion with the religion which had been present in the country prior to the Israelite immigration, while at the same time identified the ethical religion with the worship which the Israelites had brought with them into Palestine." Niels Peter Lemche, *Ancient Israel, A New History of Israelite Society*, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1984), 249; Mark S. Smith, *The Early History of God*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002), 6-7.

<sup>40</sup> Davies notes the interesting possible reversal of political power in a to-and-fro manner between the territories of Benjamin and Judah. "They may rather have thought of themselves as the rump of 'Israel,' an identity nurtured and sustained by the cult at Bethel, even after the Judean *Anschluss*, whenever that occurred, and especially when, in a kind of reversed *Anschluss*, they had the opportunity to incorporate (or to exclude) Judah in their own history. Possibly the pro-Judean Deuteronomistic History was partly provoked by a pre-existing, pro-Benjamite history." Davies, "The Origin of Biblical Israel," 144.

<sup>41</sup> Levtow, *Images of Others*, 4-5.

Canaanites as a group separate from Israelites or Judahites formed a convenient fiction. Niehr has demonstrated that there is no historical evidence for the existence of a nation or ethnic group known as 'Canaan' or 'Canaanites'.<sup>42</sup> Nowhere is there evidence demonstrating these as distinct from the Israelites in that geographical area.<sup>43</sup> Niehr states that "'Canaan' is an ideological term coined by Hebrew writers in order to create an 'anti-people' in comparison to 'Israel'."<sup>44</sup> Given the extra-biblical references to 'Canaan' in such places as the Merneptah stele,<sup>45</sup> Amarna letters,<sup>46</sup> and Berlin pedestal base,<sup>47</sup> it is perhaps better to assert that 'Canaan' was an identity already in use, that was utilised by Dtr for their own purposes. From a propagandist point of view, this is a very clever move as it creates a false sense of national separatism between those who worshipped the aniconistic deity and those who worshipped deities (including YHWH) who were made manifest in a physical form. This social element of the condemnation could have also served to create a form of 'peer-pressure' resulting in ostracism of the group now identified as 'Canaanite'.

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<sup>42</sup> Herbert Niehr, "The Rise of YHWH in Judahite and Israelite Religion. Methodological and Religio-Historical Aspects," in *The Triumph of Elohim. From Yahwisms to Judaisms*, edited by Diana Vikander Edelman, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1996), 48-50.

<sup>43</sup> Amihai Mazar, "The Israelite Settlement," in *The Quest for the Historical Israel*, edited by Brian B. Schmidt, (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007), 94-95.

<sup>44</sup> Niehr, "The Rise of YHWH in Judahite and Israelite Religion," 48-50.

<sup>45</sup> Michael G. Hasel, "Merneptah's Inscription and Reliefs and the Origin of Israel," in *Near East in the Southwest: Essays in Honor of William G. Dever*, edited by Beth Alpert Nakhai, (Boston: American Schools of Oriental Research, 2003), 19-44; Dermot A. Nestor, *Cognitive Perspectives on Israelite Identity*, (New York: T&T Clark, 2010), 178-191; Anthony J. Frendo, "Back to Basics: A Holistic Approach to the Problem of the Emergence of Ancient Israel," in *In Search of Pre-Exilic Israel*, edited by John Day, (London: T&T Clark, 2004), 49-59; Kenton L. Sparks, *Ethnicity and Identity in Ancient Israel. Prolegomena to the Study of Ethnic Sentiments and Expression in the Hebrew Bible*, (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1998), 95-109; J. Maxwell Miller, "Reading the Bible Historically. The Historian's Approach," in *Israel's Past in Present Research. Essays on Ancient Israelite Historiography*, edited by V. Philips Long, (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1999), 366.

<sup>46</sup> Sparks, *Ethnicity and Identity in Ancient Israel*, 100-103.

<sup>47</sup> Peter van der Veen, Christoffer Theis and Manfred Görg, "Israel in Canaan (Long) Before Pharaoh Merneptah? A Fresh Look at Berlin Statue Pedestal Relief 21687," *Journal of Ancient Egyptian Interconnections* 2.4 (January, 2011), 17-20. While the reference to 'Israel' on the Berlin pedestal base is unclear, the reference to 'Canaan' is obvious.

## V.ii. The Problem of Psalm 135

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The work of Levtow has already been mentioned.<sup>48</sup> His focus is on the idol parodies, and the use to which they have been put throughout history, especially when encountering new and what people might be inclined to consider 'primitive' cultures. This is not, he says, a viable way of looking at iconic practices. It is only our dualistic mindset which is so ready to dismiss these practices as unsophisticated and primitive.<sup>49</sup> In fact, something that Levtow does not pick up on is the idea that despite this inherent dualism in our official schools of thought, humans are eager to subjectify objects in their everyday lives. It is common practice to name cars, boats and houses. Many people keep a special childhood toy well into adulthood and consider it to be somehow sapient, albeit mute. Things are not merely objects to humankind, but with use and care take on lives of their own.<sup>50</sup> This is a similar attitude to the one that is addressed in Ps. 135. The idols of the Israelite deity are not condemned, but those of the other nations are denigrated. In stripping them of their spiritual significance, their political power declines along with the power of their associated deity in the minds of the people. Rather than reflecting a dualistic mindset, separating the physical and spiritual, poetry and other writings such as Ps. 135 imply that the authors had a very intimate working knowledge of this worldview. Ps. 135 does not say "all idols are mere physical matter with no spiritual value," but asserts instead that "our God is far superior to yours."

The statement "The idols of the nations" (Ps. 135:15) does not condemn the practices of idolatry in general, as much as it does those associated with the cultic and

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<sup>48</sup> Levtow, *Images of Others. Iconic Politics in Ancient Israel*.

<sup>49</sup> Levtow, *Images of Others*, 6-12.

<sup>50</sup> Renfrew, *The Archaeology of Cult*, 18; Meskell, "Objects in the Mirror Appear Closer Than They Are," 53-58.

political systems of other nations. This is therefore rhetoric designed to critique the system of another government rather than their idols themselves. Levtow is correct in pointing out that this is a political statement designed to discredit non-Israelite cultic practice.<sup>51</sup> The intention of the psalm is indeed to point out that foreign idols are nothing more than stone and wood, however, this does not contradict the idea that the authors did not themselves consider there to be a connection between this physical form and the spiritual deity underpinning it: to separate the physical and the spiritual, the object and the subject.<sup>52</sup> The conclusion often drawn from this viewpoint regarding the reformers of the pre-exilic Israelite cult was that they were aware of the simplistic and deleterious nature of iconic practices, and consequently set about eliminating them from Israelite life. This viewpoint, as Levtow demonstrates, takes the ancient reformer completely out of his cultural paradigm. To do so can only result in an interpretation of the reforming texts in a light belonging purely to modern thought, one that does no justice to the ancient society from which they came. The discrepancy thus evident is only manifest through a modern paradigm. It does not stand to reason that because Ps. 135 denigrates these idols to the status of the physical, this means that their worldview did not include a smooth interrelation between the two states of being.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Levtow, *Images of Others*, 75. This is also evident from his summary of the dynamics of these political 'statements' at the beginning of his Chapter 4, "Iconic Politics in Ancient Israel", 130-132.

<sup>52</sup> Although Mettinger does not agree with the notion that there was a cult statue of some form representing YHWH, he admits that this does not mean that the deity did not take an anthropomorphic form in the minds of the people. "The *mental* notions of deity nurtured by the worshippers may well be anthropomorphic, even if the cult object is aniconic." Mettinger, "Cult Image or Aniconism in the First Temple?," 275, original italics. "It is easy to imagine that the bull statue was originally a pedestal for an invisible standing deity that was subsequently misunderstood as a statue of the deity himself." 280, n.16.

<sup>53</sup> To be sure the psalmist is engaging in considerable exaggeration, overstating his case in order to parody the cult and the worshippers of other deities. His parody follows an account of all the wonderful deeds of YHWH and his comparison amounts to a declaration about the supremacy of YHWH. The parody thus has to be taken in this context.

In the ancient world this was very much the case regarding cultic practices. The entire political and cultural structure of ancient peoples was geared around iconic practices and the subjectification of objects. For them, there was no contradiction in seeing the spiritual subject as present in the physical object, and vice versa.<sup>54</sup> Thus, Judith Hadley is very much coming from a dualistic mindset when she suggests that for the ancient Israelites the object gradually became merged with the subject.<sup>55</sup> They were never considered to be separate entities to begin with.

### **V.iii. Development of an Aniconistic Monotheism**

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One of the loudest voices in the development of an understanding of the rise of Israelite monotheism is Mark Smith, who is a proponent of the slow polytheism-developing-through-to-monotheism school of thought. He agrees that this was a very gradual process, and that Dtr were involved fairly actively in it. However, Smith also puts forward the case that it is thoroughly unfounded to assert that monotheism, or even monolatry, was a prevailing trend during the Israelite monarchy.

Thus, claims of ‘practical monotheism,’ or even ‘monolatry’ overlook the biblical evidence to the contrary, retrojecting into ‘biblical Israel’ a singularity of divinity that the Bible itself does not claim for ancient Israel.<sup>56</sup>

Lemche, on the other hand, is a proponent of the idea that Israelite cultic practice went through a monolatrous stage on its way to monotheism, at some point during the period

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<sup>54</sup> As was common in the ANE. This is represented comprehensively in the Nimrud prism, an analysis of which is provided by Becking, “The Gods in Whom They Trusted,” 156-161. This has also been noted by Mauss, who states that “Things... still have a soul.” Marcel Mauss, *The Gift*, (New York: W.W. Norton, 1990), 66-68.

<sup>55</sup> Or, alternatively, the subject and the object drifted apart. Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah. Evidence for a Hebrew Goddess*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 71-72. She goes on to admit that “it is probably true that in the mind of the ancient Israelites, offering something to the statue of a deity would be the same as offering it to the deity itself and vice versa. Therefore, if you destroyed the cultic object of a deity, it could be said that the deity was vanquished as well.” 71-72.

<sup>56</sup> Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism*, 149.

immediately preceding the exile.<sup>57</sup> The idea of monolatry<sup>58</sup> *per se* in Israelite cultic practice is not one which can be dismissed out of hand. There are biblical indications of monolatry – the first commandment for example – and if one were to argue a case for polytheism pre-exile and strict monotheism post-exile without a real transitional period (which could easily encompass monolatry), then one could be considered as placing unrealistic expectations on the belief structures of the people involved. It is reasonable to consider that there would be a monolatrous transitional period which in some way reflects the worship of one deity above all others, while still acknowledging the existence of those others, and none at all that there would be an almost instantaneous shift from outright polytheism to strict monotheism.<sup>59</sup> Such a construction as monolatry fills the transitional period between polytheism and monotheism rather neatly. Whether or not this monolatry was in any way intentional is another matter altogether. This form of reverence could easily have come about as a specific policy in response to a natural disaster or similar devastating event, or it could have been the temporary result of the reform movement during which the people understood that they ought only worship the one deity, while at the same time still believing in the existence of others.

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<sup>57</sup> Niels Peter Lemche, *The Old Testament Between Theology and History. A Critical Survey*, (Louisville: WJK Press, 2008), 81-87. Lemche also argues that the Israelite religion became merged syncretistically with the Canaanite one, an argument which is logical only from a perspective of separate origins for the two identities.

<sup>58</sup> Monolatry is the focus on one particular deity within a pantheon under exceptional circumstances. A brief definition of monolatry can be found in Lemche, *The Old Testament Between Theology and History*, 83.

<sup>59</sup> As is expressed in Lemaire, *The Birth of Monotheism*, 43-47; *contra* Smith, who feels that such a classification does not do justice to the reality of pluralistic life in Ancient Israel. "Indeed, claims for this sort of monotheism not only beg the question by such qualifications as 'de facto' or 'virtual'; they also rely on argument by omission, assuming that biblical texts lacking mention of other deities may be used to reconstruct such putative forms of worship." Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism*, 149-150. That both polytheistic and monotheistic ideologies could have enjoyed a period of peaceful coexistence in ancient Israel is a possibility. It is also likely that the experience of the exile hastened the transition from polytheism to monotheism, encouraged by the post-exilic efforts of Haggai and Zechariah 1-8 to rebuild the Temple and re-establish the cult. Dever notes that one thing that stands out in the archaeology of post-exilic Israel is the lack of evidence for polytheism, as opposed to any other period preceding it. Dever, *Did God Have a Wife?*, 299-300.

Chapter 2 of this study has touched upon the idea of the economic development of the Israelite people through the system of patronage or *latifundia*. The possibility exists that this also had a profound effect on the development of an aniconistic monotheism, especially as it transitioned through a monolatrous phase. Smith states that

by the seventh century the lineage system of the family had perhaps eroded, thanks to a variety of factors, including the deleterious effects of royal power on traditional patriarchal authority the purchase of family lands by a growing upper class, and the devastating effects of warfare on the countryside.<sup>60</sup>

These are all symptoms of the development of *latifundia*/patronage systems and are all economically related. “Accordingly, later Israelite monotheism was denuded of the divine family, perhaps reflecting Israel’s weakening family lineages and patrimonies.”<sup>61</sup> Therefore, the consolidation of the gods into monotheism is potentially a rejection of the concept of a divine family relationship. On the surface this appears to fly in the face of the covenant relationship so heavily advocated by Dtr, and especially as expressed in Exodus. However, the development of this theology is to address this very issue. The family has been taken from God, who is now forced to seek a new relationship with creation.<sup>62</sup>

While the roots of an aniconistic monotheism centered on the deity YHWH are debated, many scholars assume that these roots have their origin with the Deuteronomistic school of thought. Indeed it does seem that Dtr had considerable influence over this shift in cultic focus. The intimate associations between Dtr and specific passages of the biblical text have been dealt with in previous chapters of this thesis; however, it is necessary to at least

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<sup>60</sup> Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism*, 164.

<sup>61</sup> Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism*, 164.

<sup>62</sup> Gnuse notes that this posed a problem for monotheism, in that it raised the one deity to a status where it was no longer able to be held accountable for the evil in the world. Robert Karl Gnuse, *No Other Gods: Emergent Monotheism in Israel*, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 243-249.

briefly discuss their influence over the development of an aniconistic monotheism here.<sup>63</sup> This is supported by the archaeological data.<sup>64</sup> Smith also posits the theory that “Monotheistic rhetoric probably arrived shortly before the exile.”<sup>65</sup> The efficacy of this statement depends on how much earlier than the exile is considered as ‘shortly before’, ten years, or two hundred? That such a polemic could have developed overnight and worked its way into official rhetoric is highly unlikely. Although this rhetoric and the obvious struggle faced by those attempting to assert it to the larger population (and many kings) is evident in the texts, the simple fact that many kings and large sections of widespread population had to be convinced indicates that a much longer timeframe was necessary. Given this, the reasons for the rhetoric become obvious. If Lang’s theory is feasible<sup>66</sup> such rhetoric first appeared, in however small a way, during the reign of Hezekiah. This allows for roughly a hundred years of development before claiming the public scene with Josiah.

There is also a consolidation against the other nations who are victorious over Israel and Judah, lording their gods over the conquered peoples.<sup>67</sup>

First in the face of the great empires and then in exile, Israel stands at the bottom of its political power, and it exalts its deity inversely as ruler of the whole universe, with little regard for the status of the elder deities known from the pre-exilic literary record.<sup>68</sup>

Smith also equates the formation of monotheism with the political situation combined with the emergence of the ‘super-power’ gods (for example Marduk, the Assyrian deity who rose

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<sup>63</sup> To this end, Smith states that “Some scholars claim that some references in the Deuteronomistic History predate the exile, but other scholars have dated the sections containing the monotheistic sentiments to the exile or later. Of course, it is difficult to know which dating is correct, but on the whole the late monarchy and exile seem to represent the general period for the emergence of monotheistic rhetoric.” Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism*, 153.

<sup>64</sup> The Kuntillet ‘Ajrud and Khirbet el Qom inscriptions are prime examples of the prevalence of other deities in Israelite territories. These will be discussed further in chapter 6.

<sup>65</sup> Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism*, 154.

<sup>66</sup> Lang, “No God but Yahweh!,” 41-49.

<sup>67</sup> Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism*, 165 n.114.

<sup>68</sup> Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism*, 165, also n.117 and n.287.

to power along with Assyrian might). However, given that the real origin of such ‘super-powers’ could be dated as early as the reign of Akhenaton in Egypt with the competition between the Aten and Amun, c. 1350 BCE,<sup>69</sup> and that Israelite monotheism has its origins with the Deuteronomists, c. 700 BCE, this estimation is very likely premature.

The development and purpose of this monotheistic rhetoric was focused on persuading the people that YHWH was, firstly, the best above the interchangeable and insubstantial deities and, secondly, therefore the only real one – the only one of any potency whatsoever.

Monotheistic statement attempted to persuade Judeans still unconvinced of this perspective. Perhaps these declarations represent the efforts of a minority of ‘monotheists’ to persuade a majority of Judeans who held Yahweh as the head of a larger group of divinities of divine powers. Perhaps the main point of such statements was not simply to move the latter into the ‘monotheistic camp’ but to convince them of the reality of Yahweh’s power in the world.<sup>70</sup>

This catch-cry was adopted by the latter prophets, such as Jeremiah, who agreed with the Deuteronomistic ideology that YHWH was the only deity of any worth and that all others were insubstantial. The earlier prophets, however, do not evince signs of subscribing to this rhetoric – Hosea for example never condemned Asherah or any of the cultic symbols associated with the cult surrounding the goddess or YHWH, although he did object to Baal on the basis that he was ‘foreign’ (Hosea 2:8, 13, 16, 17; 9:10; 11:2; 13:1). Given the focus of these earlier prophets compared to that of the later ones, it can be concluded with Smith that “Unless we assume that prophets did not know what they were talking about, their criticisms of polytheism suggest that Judean society in the late monarchy enjoyed a range of

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<sup>69</sup> Regine Schulz and Matthias Seidel, *Egypt: The World of the Pharaohs*, (Köln: Könemann, 1998), 148; Lynn Meskell, *Private Life in New Kingdom Egypt*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2002), 11.

<sup>70</sup> Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism*, 154-5.

polytheistic options.”<sup>71</sup> Smith’s work has also covered the titles for kings that are reminiscent of godly attributes. It is inconclusive, however, whether these kings are to be considered as having been bestowed with these attributes, or if it is an inadvertent way of praising the deity. He also discusses prophesy in relation to opposing these ‘foreign deities’, and the development of monolatry in ancient Israel.

These prophetic voices might be regarded as monolatrous, but because of their polemic against others in ancient Israel, they may not have spoken for most people in ancient Israel. In other words, it is not clear that most ancient Israelites during the monarchy either were monolatrous or regarded all other deities as foreign. Indeed, the prophetic polemics point in the opposite direction.<sup>72</sup>

To this can be added the conclusions of Pamela Berger, in her overview of archaeological data concerning this period, that Judah was polytheistic and that its people worshipped at many shrines and sanctuaries throughout the area.<sup>73</sup> The language of aniconistic monotheism is thus a rhetoric designed to support the agenda of the Deuteronomists.<sup>74</sup> Such a rhetoric can be easily developed to reflect the political and economic interests of the controlling party.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism*, 155.

<sup>72</sup> Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism*, 158-63, in particular 163.

<sup>73</sup> Pamela Berger, “Archaeology, Iconography, and the Recreation of the Past in Iron Age Holy Lands,” *Religion and the Arts* 6.4 (December, 2002), 503. She states specifically that “Thus the pre-exilic Judahites were no more monotheistic or aniconistic than other peoples of that time such as the Edomites, Moabites, Ammonites, Philistines, Phoenicians or Canaanites. The archaeological finds demonstrate that the practice of religion was varied, decentralized, and, except during the short reign of Josiah (639-609 BCE) not all restricted to the veneration of YHWH in the Temple of Jerusalem. Those putting together the epics, poetry, and ballads that make up the Bible had a certain agenda: to advance the cause of Yahwistic orthodoxy of religion and a centralized kingdom in Jerusalem under a monarch of the Davidic line. This Jerusalem-centered monotheism was read back into biblical history as the way things should always have been.”

<sup>74</sup> Stavrakopoulou, “‘Popular’ Religion and ‘Official’ Religion,” 37-50; Crouch, *The Making of Israel*, 105-140.

<sup>75</sup> Crouch, *The Making of Israel*, 105-225.

## V.iv. The Reforms of Josiah as a Deuteronomistic Manifesto

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The chapters 2 Kings 22-23 function as a summary of the Deuteronomistic stance on cultic matters, and are extremely iconoclastic. Not only do these chapters act as a polemic against all iconography associated with cultic matters, but they also detail the process of destroying all cultic imagery including the burning of *asherim*, the defiling of shrines and high places by burning corpses upon the altars and, if Niehr's findings are correct, the systematic stripping of gold and gems from the wooden frames of the statues of deities themselves, thereby making them unacceptable for cultic use.<sup>76</sup>

The hallmarks of the reform of Josiah are iconophobia and iconoclasm. After beginning repairs on the Temple, an act which establishes the good reputation of the king (in particular 2 Kings 22:1-2),<sup>77</sup> Josiah hears the words of the book of the law and is then consumed with righteous fear and concern for the results of the nation's infidelity. He embarks on a campaign to fulfil all required Deuteronomistic proscriptions against iconography. 2 Kings 22 begins with a concern which is both religious and economic – repair of the Temple and assurances that all monies are spent properly, as previous attempts at repair had been thwarted in this way (in particular 2 Kings 12:5-9).<sup>78</sup> It is only after these concerns are satisfactorily dealt with that Josiah's scribe, Shaphan, delivers the news of the scroll. Even here monetary concerns take precedence, as Shaphan reports the most important news first. In this case: how the money for Temple repair has been spent, and the

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<sup>76</sup> Herbert Niehr, "In Search of YHWH's Cult Statue in the First Temple," in *The Image and the Book*, 77-79, 91.

<sup>77</sup> This is also evident in 2 Chronicles 34. However it appears that the Chronicler is re-ordering the events of the reform to further enhance the reputation of the king. Steven L. McKenzie, *Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries: I and II Kings*, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2004), 358-365.

<sup>78</sup> In 2 Chronicles 34:3-7 the Chronicler places the instigation of the reforms *before* the scheme to repair the Temple and the story about the discovery of the scroll is then used as validation of the reforms already begun. It is unclear in 2 Chronicles 34:3-7 why the king would rend his clothes in worry, as he does in 2 Kings 22:11, if he was already enforcing the cultic 'purification' mandated by the scroll.

honesty of all those involved in the work. It is only after these assurances that Josiah enacts his policies of reform. From the narrative point of view this could be considered as a lead-up to the more important news by dismissing the mundane in the initial stages of the conversation, however from a practical standpoint fiscal concerns will always take precedence.

The exact extent of this law as received by Josiah is a topic of debate. Mayes goes so far as to conclude that the book of Deuteronomy was most likely compiled in 598 BCE, along with Dtr's redaction of the reforms of Josiah, leading to a cycle in which the finding of the book is backdated to the beginning of the reforms, leading to the development of Dtr's theology.<sup>79</sup> This does not reduce the Deuteronomistic nature of Josiah's reforms, nor does it absolve the reforms of Deuteronomistic influence. The reforms may have somewhat reduced the practices and pantheon of the time but the drastic nature of this is only reflected in Dtr's account. Mayes also refers to the historicity of the account as "improbable", and that "This is a theological story which has its main focus not on the finding of the book of the law in the Temple, but on pushing forward Josiah as a righteous king who acted in accordance with the law of Moses."<sup>80</sup> The story of the finding of the scroll was a vehicle by which the recorders of the events of the reform stressed the difference between Josiah and his predecessors, and thus also the inherent 'rightness' of his actions.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> A.D.H. Mayes, *New Century Bible Commentary: Deuteronomy*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 100-102. Zevit argues that the reform was instigated by Josiah, and that in mandating repairs for the Temple he dipped into funds previously allocated to the Jerusalem priesthood. This then led to centralisation which was supposed to compensate the priests for the loss of income. Josiah's reform was initially inspired by his Deuteronomistic advisers during his youth and then enabled by the political situation occasioned by Assyria's decline. Ziony Zevit, *The Religions of Ancient Israel. A Synthesis of Parallaxic Approaches*, (New York: Continuum, 2001), 474-476.

<sup>80</sup> Mayes, *Deuteronomy*, 100.

<sup>81</sup> Mayes, *Deuteronomy*, 100-103.

The iconoclastic practices of Josiah's reform are elucidated in 2 Kings 23:4-7. While the Jewish Publication Society translates *השבית* in v.5 as 'suppressed', many other translations render this as 'exterminated' (*The New Jerusalem Bible*) or 'put down' (*The King James Version, American Standard Version*). This is due to the later references in the chapter to the defilement of altars and the burning of human bones upon them. 'Suppressed' is, however, a more accurate translation of this term as it is used here as the hiphil of *שָׁבַת* meaning to "cause to cease" or to "put an end to" in this instance a certain practice.<sup>82</sup> The exact nature of this suppression is a matter of debate. How radical exactly were these reforms of Josiah?<sup>83</sup> These *כַּמָּרִים* are implied by Dtr to have been priests associated with cultic idols, but there is enough in the text to demonstrate that they were legitimately Yahwistic, especially once the distinction is made later in the same verse between these and the priests of Baal and "all the host of heaven" (2 Kings 23:5). Josiah 'caused them to cease to function to be'. These priests had been put in place by previous kings, possibly serving in shrines established in Solomonic times.<sup>84</sup> They are considered as separate to those who serve at altars to Baal and other deities – they are serving at shrines and altars to YHWH which are located outside the Jerusalem Temple precinct.<sup>85</sup> Josiah also plunders the Temple

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<sup>82</sup> As defined in the BDB, 992.

<sup>83</sup> Knoppers refers to Josiah's actions as not only taking steps to eradicate external sanctuaries, but rendering them completely "unfit for reuse." The intention was not simply to prevent the use of such places, "but to eliminate these institutions entirely." Gary N. Knoppers, *Two Nations Under God. The Deuteronomistic History of Solomon and the Dual Monarchies. Volume 2. The Reign of Jeroboam, the Fall of Israel and the Reign of Josiah*, (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1994), 183-184.

<sup>84</sup> That these priests and their cultic places were legitimate is asserted by Diana Edelman, "Cultic Sites and Complexes Beyond the Jerusalem Temple," in *Religious Diversity in Ancient Israel and Judah*, 82-103. She states that "The very limited use of this term makes it impossible to grasp the reason for the specification in 2 Kings 23.5 that the *kēmārīm* appointed by the kings of Judah to offer sacrifices by fire... in *bāmôt* complexes in the walled settlements and the areas surrounding Jerusalem were deposed; they seem to be identical with the *kōhānīm* who also had been making offerings by fire in *bāmôt* in the walled settlements of Judah from Geba to Beersheba, who were removed from the walled settlements in v.8." 86.

<sup>85</sup> Doorly describes these priests as related to the Aaronid priesthood instead of the Levitical priesthood, giving motive for the Deuteronomistic Levitical focus to discriminate against them. William J. Doorly, *Obsession with Justice. The Story of the Deuteronomists*, (New York: Paulist Press, 1994), 153-155.

itself, stripping it of its cultic paraphernalia and even possibly demolishing some sections of it. If the text is to be believed, the 'houses of the male prostitutes' (2 Kings 23:7) were within the Temple complex itself.

In this context the notion of male prostitutes, possibly associated with the cult of YHWH (explicitly associated in the context of the phrase with the male deity himself) are introduced in the text.<sup>86</sup> However, 'male prostitutes' is an interesting addition in this passage, as they are an economical conundrum. They are male קדשים, they are especially 'set apart' or 'consecrated', and they are explicitly tied to the legitimate cult of YHWH in the Jerusalem Temple. This practice now comes under severe scrutiny by Dtr. These male 'holy ones' may have been attached to temples as part of money raising.<sup>87</sup> Ritual prostitution was also a common aspect of the cult of Baal; however, as has already been established in chapter 2, such practices were a legitimate aspect of the early Israelite cult. This does not imply that Baalistic practices were specifically evident at Yahwistic cultic sites, merely that some similarity in aspects of their cultus, as members of the same pantheon, was

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<sup>86</sup> While the presence of male prostitutes in the biblical text raises many interesting questions, it is not within the scope of this study to give a thorough analysis of this aspect of early Israelite worship. Insofar as male prostitutes had a potential influence on both the Israelite economy and the ideology of the Deuteronomistic group they are applicable to the argument presented here.

<sup>87</sup> An article by van der Toorn has explored the female side of ritual prostitution, especially in the sense that it enabled women to raise money to expiate a debt incurred towards the Temple through a vow. There is no reason why the same arguments could not be applicable to men. Karel van der Toorn, "Female Prostitution in Payment of Vows in Ancient Israel," *JBL* 108.2 (1989), 193-205. In a footnote to his discussion on cult prostitution. Hess notes that "The small amount of evidence for male prostitution in the ancient Near East suggests that it was rare." Hess then goes on to equate such prostitution with homosexuality. Hess, *Israelite Religions*, 334. Such a view restricts the female of society to selling her services for money, but not purchasing them for herself and is thus incomplete. If, as Hess argues, cult prostitutes functioned as a physical manifestation of the fertility deities, could not a woman who has difficulty conceiving with her husband not employ their services to aid with the conception? This is an area which has yet to be explored. It is also an economic consideration for the Temple authorities. Given this, it is unclear why the reforming party would object to income generated from such a source, unless it were linked with a particular iconography.

inevitable.<sup>88</sup> Any practice associated with the iconography of this pantheon, whether related specifically to YHWH or his Asherah, became a point of reform for Josiah and the Deuteronomists. That this aspect of Temple practices was not included in the reforms of Hezekiah also speaks for its cultic legitimacy.<sup>89</sup>

2 Kings 22-23 makes it explicit that whatever was revealed in the Book of the Law found in the Temple, external priests and by extension sacrifice to and worship of *any* deity, including YHWH, were considered as illegitimate to the point that those engaged in these activities were suppressed, with the possibility that they were also to be put to death. Likewise, the asherah was an unacceptable totem, not to be put aside for a later date when the cultic sands shifted again, but to be removed and destroyed utterly (עפר literally 'reduced to dust').

Hadley associates 2 Kings 23:4-7 with the beginning of the amalgamation of the goddess Asherah with her cultic symbol.

II Ki. xxiii 5 mentions priests who burned incense to the Baal, to the sun, and to the moon and planets and all the host of heaven (omitting the asherah). It is odd that Asherah is not mentioned here with the other deities. But if the cultic image was on its way to losing the idea of a goddess behind it which represented (or if the image was becoming associated with Yahweh and not Asherah...), then the omission would not be so strange.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> The comparisons between YHWH and Baal are discussed in John Day, *Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan*, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 91-127. Interestingly, Day argues that the idea of resurrection did not come from Zoroastrianism as has often been thought, but from the Baal cycle, 116-127. Herrmann argues that although aspects of Baal were likely transferred to YHWH, this is transference only and not syncretism. W. Herrmann, "Baal," in *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, edited by Karel van der Toorn, Bob Becking and Pieter W. van der Horst, (New York: E.J. Brill, 1995), 259-261. YHWH is also commonly associated with El, as many of El's characteristics appear to have been appropriated by YHWH as the YHWH-alone movement grew in strength and popularity. W. Herrmann, "El," in *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, 522-533.

<sup>89</sup> Hezekiah is recorded as having taken steps toward centralisation, cut down sacred posts, and stripped the bronze serpent Nehushtan from the Temple. No mention of other practices or iconography is made in the account of his reign, and proactive iconoclasm does not seem to have been a part of his agenda.

<sup>90</sup> Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah*, 71.

There is an anomaly in this passage where reference is made to the elimination of the cult object from the Temple, which is not supported with any reference to the worship of the goddess herself in the subsequent verses. 2 Kings 23:4-7 has the hallmarks of Dtr rhetoric focused on programmatic iconoclastic behaviour directed even towards YHWH, and stands as a text that represents the Deuteronomistic victory over all anthropomorphic and theriomorphic imagery. With this victory, Dtr ensured that the reestablishment of sites of sacrifice and tithing became a thing of the past. This passage reflects the emergent aniconistic attitude of a faction who considered the only legitimate site of sacrifice to be the Jerusalem Temple.

## **V.v. Economics and Aniconistic policy**

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While many of these aspects of cultic practice are not at first glance related to money or power, a closer examination indicates that there is more of an economic connection than is immediately evident. External worship is the first and most explicit example of this. Temple income is generated primarily on an agricultural basis.<sup>91</sup> Often, surrounding lands were owned by the temple or sanctuary complex, and either worked by employees of the complex or 'rented' out for a significant portion of the produce as 'rent'. These establishments also owned herds, often large enough to sustain the sacrifices at major festivals – thousands of head of cattle, goats, sheep and other animals are reported as having been sacrificed at some of the larger holy festivals in the ANE of this time,

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<sup>91</sup> As demonstrated in the analysis of Richard Muth, "Economic Influences on Early Israel," *JSOT* 75 (1997), 77-92. Stevens also details the other activities undertaken by the temple complex in order to generate income, although most of them have an agricultural root. Marty E. Stevens, "'Tithes and Taxes: The Economic Role of the Jerusalem Temple in its Ancient Near Eastern Context,'" (PhD diss., Union Theological Seminary and Presbyterian School of Christian Education, 2002), 50-89.

including the report in 2 Chronicles 7:5 of Solomon's offering.<sup>92</sup> If each 'external' shrine maintained even a modest farming area and small flock, elimination of the priests and overseers of that shrine would leave these resources 'exposed' to the ravages of whichever regime came into contact with them. Appropriation of these resources would then be relatively easy, especially with state sanction. Furthermore, the function of temples in the ANE as financial institutions meant that the Jerusalem Temple was able to corner a monopoly on the official finance sector including lease of Temple lands.<sup>93</sup>

The priests of Asherah also, and by extension their cultic paraphernalia, represent use of resources that could be appropriated by the Jerusalem Temple and, more specifically, the controlling group of Yahwistic priests. Land allocated to the maintenance of any other deity or site is land that is: a) not currently allocated to maintenance of YHWH at the Jerusalem Temple, and b) land that could potentially be converted to this usage and by extension to the maintenance of the priests. In mandating against iconography Dtr were able to consolidate the 'essence' of the deity into one centralised place of worship, while ensuring by their iconoclastic efforts that the re-establishment of another shrine was no longer worth the risk.<sup>94</sup>

The Deuteronomistic polemic against iconography would have had to be complete, and consistent, to achieve its full effect. It is evident that implicated in this 'array of heaven' is YHWH himself, and that his own iconography fell victim to the reforms just as that of the

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<sup>92</sup> Stevens, "Tithes and Taxes," 206; Joy McCriston, *Pilgrimage and Household in the Ancient Near East*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 101-116.

<sup>93</sup> Stevens, *Temples, Tithes and Taxes*, 82-93.

<sup>94</sup> Knoppers describes the reform of Josiah as "clearly mark[ing] the climax to the *במות* theme in Kings." Knoppers, *Two Nations Under God*, Volume 2, 186, my insertion. The same is true of *asherim*, 187. The cry of the women in Jeremiah 44:17-18 that they used to worship the Queen of Heaven attests to the efficacy of Josiah's reforms – "But ever since we stopped making offerings to the Queen of Heaven and pouring libations to her, we have lacked everything, and we have been consumed by the sword and by famine."

other deities, although the taumorph imagery associated with him is rarely mentioned. There is no evidence of bull statuary representing YHWH in the Jerusalem Temple, unlike that present at the sanctuary at Bethel and the finds from such sites as the Bull Site near Dothan, and Ashkelon.<sup>95</sup> The representative iconography for YHWH in this location could have been limited to the Ark,<sup>96</sup> and possibly Nehushtan, although again there is debate regarding whether the bronze serpent represented YHWH or Asherah.<sup>97</sup> That it was legitimate is not in doubt.<sup>98</sup>

## V.vi. Conclusion

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Aniconism takes two primary forms, *de facto* and *programmatic*. In their quest for religious control and economic supremacy, the movement known as Dtr, who may have been a Levitical faction associated with Jeremiah,<sup>99</sup> transformed the already *de facto* aniconistic cult of YHWH into a programmatic one in order to centralise power and income at the Jerusalem Temple. The iconography of other deities, primarily Asherah the legitimate female deity associated with YHWH's cult,<sup>100</sup> fell victim to this regime. In the process YHWH's cultic paraphernalia – the calves, *maṣṣeboth*, the ark, and cherubim throne were

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<sup>95</sup> As discussed in Hess, *Israelite Religions*, 155-162.

<sup>96</sup> Although rather than directly representing YHWH the Ark may have functioned purely as a throne for the deity.

<sup>97</sup> Claudia Camp, "1 and 2 Kings," in *The Women's Bible Commentary*, edited by Carol A. Newsom and Sharon H. Ringe, (Westminster: John Knox Press, 1998), 102; Olyan, *Asherah and the Cult of Yahweh in Israel*, 70-74; *contra* Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses and Images of God in Ancient Israel*, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 274, where an association between Nehushtan and Asherah is rejected.

<sup>98</sup> Keel and Uehlinger note the Canaanite origin of the bronze serpent, although they do not accept the association of Canaanite and Israelite cultus, considering them inherently separate. They posit that Hezekiah took exception to Nehushtan on the basis of its Canaanite origin. *Gods, Goddesses and Images of God*, 274. Hendel considers the serpent as part of "the traditional repertoire of Yahwistic symbols". Hendel, "Nehushtan," 1160.

<sup>99</sup> As has been discussed in chapter 1.

<sup>100</sup> As will be discussed further in chapter 6.

also condemned, repudiated and destroyed despite their legitimacy in previous tradition. That Dtr knew and understood the integral workings of iconographic cultic practice only enforces the conclusion that iconography in and of itself did not bother them, but that a programmatic aniconistic policy served as a means to an end, and that that end provided them with a large fiscal advantage. The cult of YHWH may have begun as a *de facto* aniconism amongst the early Israelite pantheon, but in the transformation to a programmatic aniconism instigated during the reign of Josiah, YHWH became the only God. יהוה אחד.

## VI. Asherah.

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A fresh examination of Asherah can now be undertaken in the light of the previous analyses. Asherah is an outstanding example of the threat presented to Dtr's conception of Israel as exclusively Yahwistic, of the far-reaching extent of the reforms, and also of the mechanisms by which those reforms were enacted. The JPFs are particularly critical to such a classification, as they are an excellent example of the widespread nature of iconography in Judah in the 8<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE, whether they relate directly to Asherah or not.<sup>1</sup> Stern has noted that while excavations of Judah of the 7<sup>th</sup> century have uncovered a plethora of figurines and other votive paraphernalia, in the following period these finds diminish significantly to vanish completely in the post-exilic period.<sup>2</sup> This can therefore be used as a yardstick for determining the success of the aniconistic movement for the people now to be identified as 'Israel'.

The question of the significance of Asherah in ancient Israel is one which has fascinated scholars in recent years. A major catalyst for such a fascination was the discovery of inscriptions linking Asherah with YHWH at sites at Kuntillet 'Ajrud (of which the final report has recently been released)<sup>3</sup> and Khirbet el Qom. These discoveries brought biblical references to Asherah into sharp focus, and necessitated a reassessment of those that condemned the worship of her in Israelite society. Furthermore, these inscriptions contradict the biblical assertion that she was the consort of Baal, instead placing her by the

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<sup>1</sup> It is the opinion of this study that they do, as will be demonstrated below.

<sup>2</sup> Ephraim Stern, "Religion in Palestine in the Assyrian and Persian Periods," in *The Crisis of Israelite Religion. Transformation of Religious Tradition in Exilic and Post-Exilic Times*, edited by Bob Becking and Marjo C.A. Korpel, (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 254.

<sup>3</sup> Ze'ev Meshel, *Kuntillet 'Ajrud (Horvat Teman): An Iron Age II Religious Site on the Judah-Sinai Border*, (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 2012).

side of YHWH. The inscription from Kuntillet 'Ajrud in particular has been the cause of much debate, not only because of the written inscriptions but also due to the drawings found associated with them at the site, appearing to depict the deities YHWH and Asherah in numerous forms.<sup>4</sup> Given that these findings have been the genesis of a new and insightful study of the association of Asherah with the cult of YHWH in ancient Israel, this chapter will begin by providing an overview of the current scholarship surrounding them. This will be followed by analyses of other extra-biblical material relating to Asherah and/or her cultic symbol the asherah, and finally a discussion of the biblical passages surrounding a study thereof. These passages have been selected from the forty passages most usually considered in the study of this goddess,<sup>5</sup> and will be discussed in consideration of their relationship to Asherah or her cultic symbol, and also to the degree in which each passage reflects the Deuteronomistic policy of centralisation. In addition, any connection with practices associated with YHWH and their condemnation by association with Asherah will be given consideration in each analysis.

Unfortunately, extra-biblical evidence relating to Asherah is somewhat scarce. It is worth noting that in spite of the volume of extra-biblical goddess statues which *may* be representations of Asherah, actual references to the goddess in an Israelite context are extremely limited. For example, outside of those instances such as Kuntillet 'Ajrud and Khirbet el Qom there is very little evidence for an Asherah of Teman or an Asherah of

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<sup>4</sup> Such as representations of YHWH and Asherah as Bes type figures, or as suckling calves or stylised trees, as depicted on pithos A detailed in Fig. 6.5 in Pirhiya Beck, "The Drawings and Decorative Designs," in *Kuntillet 'Ajrud (Horvat Teman)*, 147.

<sup>5</sup> As listed in Steve A. Wiggins, "Of Asherahs and Trees: Some Methodological Questions," *Journal of Near Eastern Religions* 1.1 (2001), 162, n. 26.

Samaria.<sup>6</sup> The prolific Pillar-Based Figurines have been demonstrated to be representations of Asherah, and are widespread throughout the Judahite area. Other references to Asherah outside of the biblical text are found primarily in the Ugaritic literature. Such literature, as Wyatt demonstrates, can be considered an indication of the common ideology and values of the entire area during the LBA, if not later.<sup>7</sup> Keel and Uehlinger have argued that although אֲשֶׁרָה takes a definite article in the biblical text, this can be seen as a Deuteronomistic technique to associate Asherah with Baal, paralleling her with הַבָּאֵל instead of with the name of YHWH which never takes a definite article.<sup>8</sup> The plural form of the name is also a device used by Dtr to associate Asherah with Baal. These are often pluralised in conjunction as ‘the Baals’ and ‘the Asherahs’, but never is there an instance of ‘the YHWHs’.<sup>9</sup> Such a method increases the ‘common’ nature of the deities and in doing so devalues them. According to Keel and Uehlinger, this is “to be understood as the Deuteronomistic technique for slandering ‘Canaanite’ deities.”<sup>10</sup> This presence of the goddess Asherah and her cultic symbol, and the vitriolic response elicited from the Deuteronomists in Jerusalem in the 7<sup>th</sup> century onwards, can be considered an indication of the widespread nature of the cultic practices associated with Asherah in Yahwism throughout the Levant through at least 300 years, if not much longer. The conclusion to be drawn from this is that Asherah was present

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<sup>6</sup> Othmar Keel and Christoph Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses and Images of God in Ancient Israel*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 224-233, 400-401.

<sup>7</sup> N. Wyatt, “Royal Religion in Ancient Judah,” in *Religious Diversity in Ancient Israel and Judah*, edited by Francesca Stavrakopoulou and John Barton, (London: T&T Clark, 2010), 63-65. Wyatt states that “Although it is thus too early to give us direct contact with the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, there are a remarkable number of direct correspondences in structure, and it is probably fairly accurate to speak of a common ideology... across the region, so that making cautious comparisons is a legitimate procedure.” 64; *contra* Zevit, who argues for extreme caution in such comparisons, Ziony Zevit, *The Religions of Ancient Israel. A Synthesis of Parallactic Approaches*, (New York: Continuum, 2001), 649, n.70.

<sup>8</sup> Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses and Images of God*, 229-230.

<sup>9</sup> For good reason, YHWH is not polemicised in this way. His iconography is polemicised by associating it instead with other deities who are then portrayed as aberrant. Wiggins also notes that Deut. 16:21 is the only verse in which YHWH and Asherah are explicitly associated with one another in a cultic setting. Wiggins, “Of Asherahs and Trees,” 167.

<sup>10</sup> Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses and Images of God in Ancient Israel*, 230.

in the cult before the north – south split of the monarchy, and therefore was involved in the Israelite religion as an autochthonous and well established element of broad cultic practice.<sup>11</sup>

Asherah was a victim of the Deuteronomistic desire for a centralised cult. In particular her iconography, as readily available to all members of the public and in many cases portable,<sup>12</sup> threatened the reform by encouraging the establishment of small shrines “under every leafy tree” (Deut. 12:2). That Dtr could have been at least partially successful in stopping the worship of a female deity towards the end of the monarchy (albeit temporarily) is evident from Jeremiah 44:18, with the confession of the people that they had “stopped making offerings to the Queen of Heaven and pouring libations to her”.<sup>13</sup> However, whether this is a reflection of what the author hoped would have been the case or of a real situation is open to debate.

There are clear links between the cult of YHWH and the cult of Asherah in ancient Israel. There is a great deal of evidence for this in the biblical texts alone, aside from the extra-biblical inscriptional and archaeological evidence. The pertinent biblical texts pertaining to these issues will be discussed below. The purpose of the current section is to deal with the extra-biblical material relating to Asherah and, where applicable, her

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<sup>11</sup> As is discussed by William G. Dever, *Did God Have a Wife?*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2005), 196-208.

<sup>12</sup> For example the Judean Pillar-Based Figurines as outlined by Raz Kletter, *The Judean Pillar-Figurines and the Archaeology of Asherah*, (Oxford: Tempvs Reparatum, 1996).

<sup>13</sup> That the Queen of Heaven is not Asherah is generally believed, this is merely an example of the success Dtr had in their reforms, however temporary it was at the time. There is no reason to believe that this temporary aniconistic monotheism (really a monolatry) did not extend to the entire pantheon. That the Queen of Heaven could have been Astarte is outlined by John Day, *Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan*, (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 131-132; Smith also mentions the Queen of Heaven in a footnote, *The Early History of God*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002), 109, n.2. Houtman considers all the major goddesses of the ANE as candidates for the title of Queen of Heaven, including both Astarte and Asherah, C. Houtman, “Queen of Heaven,” in *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, edited by Karel van der Toorn, Bob Becking and Pieter W. van der Horst, (New York: E.J. Brill, 1995), 1278-1283.

relationship to YHWH. The evidence from Kuntillet 'Ajrud and Khirbet el Qom form a major part of this material as it comprises a vital link in our understanding of the relationship between YHWH and Asherah.<sup>14</sup> This chapter will give a brief overview of this data, but due to the prevalence of analyses of it in the scholarly corpus, this will be concise.<sup>15</sup> Other major extra-biblical material associated with Asherah are the JPFs, which will also be discussed here at some length. That the figurines point to a *household* reverence for Asherah will also be dealt with in the following sections.<sup>16</sup>

Asherah was a goddess known throughout the ANE, and traditionally, the Ugaritic myths place her alongside El at the head of the pantheon.<sup>17</sup> The material that is available from the Ugaritic myths, and the other archaeological discoveries from the past century, have demonstrated that she was associated with either YHWH or El in the Israelite and Judahite pantheon and prevalent throughout that area.<sup>18</sup> There are very few who would

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<sup>14</sup> The final report on the Kuntillet 'Ajrud excavations was released in 2012, and outlines some new information regarding the representation of the Bes figures on pithos A. These figures have been the focus of much debate, as their presentation as two male figures has precluded a firm identification as representations of YHWH and his Asherah. Beck, "The Drawings and Decorative Designs," 143-203.

<sup>15</sup> Comprehensive analyses of these inscriptions have been undertaken by: Judith Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah. Evidence for a Hebrew Goddess*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 84-155; Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses and Images of God in Ancient Israel*, 210-248; Zevit, *The Religions of Ancient Israel*, 359-405; Meindert Dijkstra, "I Have Blessed you by Yhwh of Samaria and His Asherah: Texts with Religious Elements from the Soil Archive of Ancient Israel," in *Only One God? Monotheism in Ancient Israel and the Veneration of the Goddess Asherah*, edited by Meindert Dijkstra, Bob Becking, Mario C.A. Korpel and Karel J.H. Vriezen, (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 17-44.

<sup>16</sup> Such household reverence is analysed in Stavrakopoulou, "'Popular' Religion and 'Official' Religion," in *Religious Diversity in Ancient Israel and Judah*, 35-50; Carol Meyers, "Household Religion," in *Religious Diversity in Ancient Israel and Judah*, 118-130. Asherah as a deity with an apotropaic influence over the birth and childrearing process has been discussed by Rainer Albertz, "Personal Piety," in *Religious Diversity in Ancient Israel and Judah*, 142-143.

<sup>17</sup> A summary of this material is undertaken in Basem L. Ra'ad, *Hidden Histories: Palestine and the Eastern Mediterranean*, (London: Pluto Press, 2010), 50-59.

<sup>18</sup> Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism. Israel's Polytheistic Background and the Ugaritic Texts*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 54-66, 73-74; Herbert Niehr, "'Israelite' Religion and 'Canaanite' Religion," in *Religious Diversity in Ancient Israel and Judah*, 31-32; Raphael Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess*, (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1990), 36-50.

now debate the legitimacy of the Goddess Asherah in the ancient Israelite cult,<sup>19</sup> the textual and, to a certain degree archaeological,<sup>20</sup> evidence is considerable. The particular degree to which this worship was carried out, whether it was state or private, widespread or isolated, is another matter and much more difficult to determine. The biblical text is very adamant that this was a 'Canaanite' practice, distinct from YHWH,<sup>21</sup> so that it is only in recent years that scholars have begun to insist that this iconography was in fact 'traditional', as suggested in 1 Kings 12, and it is in fact the aniconistic Deuteronomistic reform which is the deviation from this traditional stance.<sup>22</sup> As has been demonstrated throughout the previous chapters, it is very likely that the population of Israel originally identified itself what would today be classified as Canaanite (although the name "Israel" itself may have been in use) and that therefore any argument based upon the premise that they stood apart from the rest of the population of the Levant is redundant. Archaeologically speaking, the material

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<sup>19</sup> An argument for legitimacy is provided by Saul M. Olyan, *Asherah and the Cult of Yahweh in Israel*, (Atlanta: Scholar's Press, 1988), 4-5; Smith, *The Early History of God*, 7; For Dijkstra, legitimacy is assumed, "Women and Religion in the Old Testament," in *Only One God?*, 164-188; *contra* Lemaire, who concludes that in the First Temple period in Israel at least, "YHWH did not have a consort." Andre Lemaire, *The Birth of Monotheism. The Rise and Disappearance of Yahwism*, (Washington DC: Biblical Archaeology Society, 2007), 62. That Asherah was considered a legitimate deity in Israel and Judah to quite a late period is supported by Day, who cites the linguistic coupling in the text of Asherah with "the Baals" as proof of this determination. The example he employs is Judges 3:7: "Although the name Asherah here appears in the plural – whether denoting various local manifestations of Asherah or Canaanite goddesses generally is not clear – the parallelism with 'the Baals' (likewise denoting either local manifestations of Baal or Canaanite gods generally) clearly implies that Asherah was understood as a divine name. Even if those are right who see 'the Ashtaroth' as the original reading, which does not seem likely, this still implies that whoever altered the text in the biblical period understood Asherah to be a divine name, thus attesting continuing awareness of Asherah as a goddess at a relatively late date." Day, *Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan*, 45.

<sup>20</sup> Many figurines have been discovered that are considered to have been representations of Asherah. However, as no figurine has yet been found with a plaque identifying her with Asherah there is always a measure of doubt as to exactly which of the several goddesses attested to ancient Israel at the time they do actually represent.

<sup>21</sup> As is reflected in the identification of iconographical practice with 'other nations', for example Deut. 12:2-4. This is indicative of the rhetoric involved in the reshaping of Israelite identity undertaken by Dtr.

<sup>22</sup> Smith, *The Early History of God*, 83-85; Brian B. Schmidt, "The Aniconic Tradition: On Reading Images and Viewing Texts," in *The Triumph of Elohism*, edited by Diana Vikander Edelman, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1995), 87-88; A middle ground is favoured by Miller, *The Religion of Ancient Israel*, (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000), 16-22.

culture of the Iron I period throughout the area is roughly uniform.<sup>23</sup> It is therefore impossible to distinguish the groups or identities of the people living within the Judahite and Israelite areas from their material culture.<sup>24</sup>

The power of symbolism is often greatly underrated. In her work *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah* Judith Hadley posits the theory that gradually the association of the Goddess Asherah with the cultic symbol the asherah declined, resulting in a greatly diminished association between the two in the eyes of the Israelite population.<sup>25</sup> While it is possible to agree with most of Hadley's assertions regarding Asherah and her iconography, it is not as easy to concur with this particular conclusion. There is a great link between the worshipped, and the symbol of that worship.<sup>26</sup> Dtr understood this, and this is why they worked towards eliminating *all* iconography from the Israelite cult, not only that pertaining to Asherah. This concept is evidenced in the ideological shift from the concept of YHWH as a purely male god, to one encompassing both male and female attributes as is demonstrated

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<sup>23</sup> As argued for example by Zevit, who comes to the conclusion "that Israelite religions of the Iron Ages were continuations, transformations, and (sometimes radical) reformulations of earlier cults that evolved in the Egyptian province of Canaan during the Late Bronze Age." *The Religions of Ancient Israel*, 686. An interesting summary of the evidence for a subsistence economy provided by Baruch Rosen notes the conservative nature of the period. Rosen, "Subsistence Economy in Iron Age I," in *From Nomadism to Monarchy*, edited by Israel Finkelstein and Nadav Na'aman, (Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi, 1994), 339-351, in particular 339. While Rosen is dealing primarily with agricultural data, it is reasonable to assume that such conservatism would have also extended into the cultic sphere.

<sup>24</sup> As mentioned above in chapter 2, the previously attested ethnic markers of Israelite Settlement in the collared-rim jar and the four-room house have recently been uncovered in non-Israelite settlements, indicating a much more widespread usage of these forms than previously thought. Alan Millard, "Amorites and Israelites: Invisible Invaders – Modern Expectation and Ancient Reality," in *The Future of Biblical Archaeology. Reassessing Methodologies and Assumptions*, edited by James K. Hoddmeier and Alan Millard, (Grand Rapids: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2004), 154-155; Israel Finkelstein, "When and How did the Israelites Emerge?," in *The Quest for the Historical Israel*, edited by Brian B. Schmidt, (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007), 78.

<sup>25</sup> Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah*, 71-72; Dijkstra, "Women and Religion in the Old Testament," 180-183.

<sup>26</sup> As has been noted by Lynn Meskell, "Objects in the Mirror Appear Closer Than They Are," in *Materiality*, edited by Daniel Miller, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 54-58; Webb Keane, "Signs Are Not The Garb Of Meaning: On the Social Analysis of Material Things," in *Materiality*, 190; Colin Renfrew, *The Archaeology of Cult: The Sanctuary at Phylakopi*, (London: The British School of Archaeology at Athens, 1985), 18.

in Mark Smith's thesis.<sup>27</sup> This is also the type of shift that de Vaux considers as most likely to have occurred with the tauromorph imagery of YHWH, where the bull iconography and the deity became so inextricably linked that the bulls were no longer a throne for the aniconistic god, but a physical representation of the god himself.<sup>28</sup>

Olyan points to the fact that Dtr were heavily influenced by prophets such as Hosea; however, Hosea never condemned the asherah. How then did this become a concern for Dtr? Olyan is unable to hazard a plausible guess.<sup>29</sup> From a purely cultic point of view, such a condemnation does not have a logical basis. The lack of concern for Asherah's apparent presence in the cult in all non-Dtr passages certainly indicates that she was a well received aspect of the official Yahwistic cult, but her iconography was so deeply intertwined with her worship that Dtr were forced to cull her entirely. Olyan also repeats the question, this time regarding monotheism, which he immediately dismisses due to the same text's attitudes to the gods of other nations (2 Kings 17:16-17). Lemaire would argue that this is evidence of monolatry, not monotheism, and therefore does not rule out this side of the argument.<sup>30</sup>

Olyan has made the common initial assumption that the polemic levelled at Asherah and her iconography is in fact Deuteronomistic. It is a reasonable assumption given the evidence, but Olyan has not fully outlined this evidence. As is often the case with scholars

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<sup>27</sup> Mark S. Smith, "God Male and Female in the Old Testament: Yahweh and His 'Asherah'," *Theological Studies* 48 (1987), 337-340.

<sup>28</sup> Roland de Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions*, (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1961), 333-334; Frank Moore Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1973), 73 n. 114. This is echoed by Olyan, *Asherah and the Cult of Yahweh in Israel*, 32. Olyan states that "The deity and his or her symbol are inseparable."

<sup>29</sup> Olyan, *Asherah and the Cult of Yahweh in Israel*, 3-4, 73. He states that "We argue that such polemic is restricted to the Deuteronomistic History or to materials which betray the influence of Deuteronomistic language and theology. The lack of concern for the asherah (or Asherah) as reflected in the literary remains of other Israelite circles opposed to the worship of Baal suggests that among these groups the cult symbol was not considered illegitimate or non-Yahwistic. This is intriguing." 4.

<sup>30</sup> Lemaire, *The Birth of Monotheism*, 43-55.

who focus on Asherah, Olyan is nominating Dtr as responsible for the elimination of Asherah<sup>31</sup> without sufficient substantiation. Further justification is needed. Olyan provides an examination of the four prophetic passages in which Asherah is mentioned, and the evidence demonstrates them all to be either Deuteronomistic, or influenced by Deuteronomistic language.<sup>32</sup>

Hadley has attempted to use the presence of *asherim* as a replacement for Asherah in the cult, arguing that they became separate entities.<sup>33</sup> However, this is contradicted by an acknowledgement of the cultic statue or symbol of a deity functioning as the living vehicle and presence of that deity on earth.<sup>34</sup> Thus, this theology gave rise to whole industries dedicated to maintaining and caring for the temples and cult statues of deities throughout the ancient world. In fact, one of the functions of ancient industries and a major portion of all economic productivity was in the provision of sacrificial offerings for the temples.<sup>35</sup> By this reasoning alone, it is far more likely that Asherah and her symbol amalgamated, than that they divided. Day disagrees with Hadley's assessment that Asherah was no longer a

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<sup>31</sup> Olyan, *Asherah and the Cult of Yahweh in Israel*, 3.

<sup>32</sup> He states that "If we are correct in our interpretation of Hosea 4:12 and 14:9, we can suggest that the opposition to the asherah and Asherah is a deuteronomistic innovation. This of course assumes that the deuteronomistic school was influenced by Hosea, and not vice versa. There is no evidence that the asherah was opposed by anyone in Israel before the reforming kings, who were following a deuteronomistic program, as scholars generally recognise." Olyan, *Asherah and the Cult of Yahweh in Israel*, 22.

<sup>33</sup> Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah*, 71-72.

<sup>34</sup> Niehr, "'Israelite' Religion and 'Canaanite' Religion," 29; Michael B. Hundley, *Gods in Dwellings. Temples and Divine Presence in the Ancient Near East*, (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2013), 352-358; Renfrew, *The Archaeology of Cult*, 18.

<sup>35</sup> As is briefly discussed By Herbert Niehr, "'Israelite' Religion and 'Canaanite' Religion," in *Religious Diversity in Ancient Israel and Judah*, 29. Particularly famous are the great necropoleis of ancient Egypt which were dedicated to the care and feeding of the dead. Such temple complexes are also attested in Assyria, Babylon, Ugarit, Greece and Rome, albeit on a lesser scale. To consider the complexes in Israel as any different is absurd. The cattle for sacrifices and wine and oil for libations, required large storage space and reliable supply. Marty E. Stevens, *Temples, Tithes and Taxes. The Temple and the Economic Life of Ancient Israel*, (Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 2006), 151-162; Norman C. Habel, *The Land is Mine. Six Biblical Land Ideologies*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 21-22 and 98-101.

goddess by the time of Dtr;<sup>36</sup> however, he does agree that this is probably the case by the time of the Chronicler.<sup>37</sup> While not extra-biblical, by comparison the gap of at least two hundred years of Dtr propaganda in their tumultuous political climate would be enough to demonize Asherah, if not eliminate her entirely.<sup>38</sup>

## VI.ii. Asherah and other goddesses.

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It has often been attempted by scholars to associate the goddess Asherah with other, more well known, goddesses from ancient Mesopotamia and Egypt.<sup>39</sup> One of the (many) reasons for this is that Chronicles<sup>40</sup> also takes this standpoint, having been written well after the cult of Asherah had been successfully abolished in ancient Israel.<sup>41</sup> Therefore Asherah is often associated, in a syncretistic way, with (among others) Anat, Astarte, Ishtar, the 'Queen of Heaven', Ashteroth and Qudshu.<sup>42</sup> It seems likely that Asherah was synonymous with one or two of these, but much less likely that she was associated in any way with most. For example, Keel and Uehlinger state specifically that (speaking of Assyrian Ishtar) "we must assert that the Assyrian Goddess can hardly be the *only* possible deity that

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<sup>36</sup> Hadley states that "certainly by the time of the Chronicler, the term had ceased to be used with any knowledge of the goddess whom it had originally represented, and from whom it received its name", 62-3.

<sup>37</sup> Day, *Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan*, 46. Day describes the idea of Asherah as a goddess as "faded away from the Jewish consciousness", 46.

<sup>38</sup> Day, *Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan*, 46.

<sup>39</sup> The etymology of Asherah is discussed by Day, albeit fairly inconclusively. He does however justifiably disagree with the view of Margalit that Asherah means "wife/footsteps". Day, *Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan*, 61-2. It is also the case that Margalit has used the drawing of the two figures from Kuntillet 'Ajrud to support this view, but it is uncertain that the figures are related to the inscription above it on pithos A, as will be discussed in more detail below. Baruch Margalit, "The Meaning and Significance of Asherah," VT 40.3 (1990), 264-297; *contra* Schmidt, who argues for an holistic approach to the representations found throughout the Kuntillet 'Ajrud site. Brian B. Schmidt, "The Iron Age *Pithoi* from Horvat Teman or Kuntillet 'Ajrud: Some New Proposals," JANER 2 (2002), 91-125.

<sup>40</sup> For example the replacement of פסל האשרה in 2 Kings 21:7 with פסל הסמל in 2 Chronicles 33:7, as is discussed in Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah*, 68-71.

<sup>41</sup> As is noted by Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah*, 78.

<sup>42</sup> The different possibilities for association of Asherah with other goddesses are covered in Day, *Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan*, 42-48; Dever, *Did God Have a Wife?*, 185.

could be meant by references to the 'Queen of Heaven,' since iconographic evidence does not support her acceptance in Judah or Jerusalem."<sup>43</sup> However, there is reason to believe that Asherah was synonymous with Qudshu, given the parallel of Asherah and Qudshu in the Ugaritic texts.<sup>44</sup>

While evidence for the presence of Astarte in pre-exilic Judah is limited,<sup>45</sup> there is a large body of evidence attesting to the presence of Asherah. This by no means suggests that in pre-exilic Judah the two goddesses were conflated and called Asherah. Evidence enough is available from the surrounding areas to make it clear that they were two distinct deities.<sup>46</sup> In his study of goddesses in the Levant Izak Cornelius has systematically treated Asherah and Astarte as separate deities.<sup>47</sup> He concludes that they play very different roles in the pantheon.<sup>48</sup> Keel and Uehlinger associate the appellation 'Queen of Heaven' with the permutation of Asherah that was linked with the functions of the Assyrian Ishtar.

If one remembers that the 'Sitz im Leben' for family piety is not differentiated by social class and that the area where the 'Queen of Heaven' was thought competent to function is very close to what could be effected by the *asherah*-pillar figurines, a general identification that equates the 'Queen of Heaven' with the 'pillar goddess' and with Asherah is possible. To be sure, nothing in Jeremiah 7 and 44 speaks about the competence of the 'Queen of Heaven' in areas connected with funerary activities and the pillar figurines conversely show no celestial and astral attributes. But the reason

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<sup>43</sup> Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses and Images of God*, 338, 339, §197.

<sup>44</sup> Commenting on KTU 1.2.22 de Moor makes the point that Qudshu is a "Name of Athiratu, mother of the gods. Both Athiratu and Qudshu mean 'holy place, sanctuary.'" Johannes C. de Moor, *A Cuneiform Anthology of Religious Texts from Ugarit*, edited by Johannes C. de Moor and Klaas Spronk, (Leiden: Brill, 1987), 32, n. 140. A similar note on KTU 1.16.I.11 is made by de Moor on 212, n. 73. That Asherah was also known as Qudshu is also supported by Day, *Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan*, 48.

<sup>45</sup> That there was some confusion between Astarte and Asherah in Phoenicia is noted by Smith, *The Early History of God*, 129. According to Patai, this confusion is also evident in the Amarna letters, *The Hebrew Goddess*, 41.

<sup>46</sup> The texts of the Ugaritic myths provide clear evidence of this, for example KTU 1.1-6 as discussed by Wyatt, "Asherah," in *Dictionary of Deities and Demons*, 183-187.

<sup>47</sup> Izak Cornelius, *The Many Faces of the Goddess: The Iconography of the Syro-Palestinian Goddesses Anat, Astarte, Qadesheth, and Asherah c. 1500-1000 BCE*, (Fribourg: Paulusverlag Freiburg Schweiz, 2008). He states that "If we accept the account of the Ugaritic pantheon as a bureaucracy... then Asherah is the authoritative ruler and Anat and Astarte the active goddesses, with 'Qadesheth' having an undefined role." 100.

<sup>48</sup> Cornelius, *The Many Faces of the Goddess*, 99-100.

for this discrepancy may lie in the fact that, on the one hand, care for the deceased was traditionally one of the functions of the Palestinian goddess while, on the other hand, the specific astral form was an exclusive aspect of the image of the Assyrian Ishtar. If the Palestinian Asherah and the Assyrian Ishtar were combined in the form and cult of the 'Queen of Heaven,' this linkage was effected without merging all their characteristics.<sup>49</sup>

This line of reasoning establishes a direct link between the cult of Asherah and the Queen of Heaven, and therefore makes the women's words in Jeremiah 44:18 all the more powerful: "But ever since we stopped making offerings to the Queen of Heaven and pouring libations to her, we have lacked everything, and we have been consumed by the sword and by famine."<sup>50</sup> However, this line of reasoning is only feasible if the title 'Queen of Heaven' can be considered as analogous to the title 'Qedeshet' which, as Cornelius notes, is not possible if Qedeshet is to be considered a goddess in her own right.<sup>51</sup> Thus Jeremiah 44:18 must be taken as generalised evidence of goddess worship undertaken in the home rather than specific reference to the deity Asherah.<sup>52</sup>

### VI.iii. Asherah and YHWH

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The worship of the *asherah* as a cultic symbol beside the shrine of YHWH, with its golden calf iconography, resulted in the long term in an amalgamation of the roles of these two deities. As people came to make sacrifices to the god YHWH, they were also presenting them to the *asherah*, intimately associated with the goddess Asherah. The reverse is also

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<sup>49</sup> Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses and Images of God*, 339-340.

<sup>50</sup> This connection is refuted by Wyatt, who holds that it is Astarte, not Asherah, who is to be associated with the Queen of Heaven. Wyatt, "Astarte," in *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, 212. Nevertheless, the precedent remains the same – rejection of goddesses within the Israelite cult was not always well received by Judah's population.

<sup>51</sup> Cornelius, *The Many Faces of the Goddess*, 95-100.

<sup>52</sup> Thus Susan Ackerman, "At Home with the Goddess," in *Symbiosis, Symbolism, and the Power of the Past. Canaan, Ancient Israel, and Their Neighbors from the Late Bronze Age Through Roman Palestina*, edited by W.G. Dever and S. Gitin, (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2003), 463-464.

true. As cakes, clothes, and libations were offered to Asherah, represented by her cultic symbol, the people were also offering them to YHWH, represented by his golden calf or by one or many *maššeboth*. The idea of a ‘syncretistic’ Yahwistic cult incorporating the ‘bad’ Canaanite deities is one which has received a great deal of popularity amongst scholarship of the past,<sup>53</sup> yet is not in accord with the archaeological evidence.<sup>54</sup> Olyan states that: “The patriarchal narratives of cult founding at Bethel, Hebron and Beersheba indicate that the sacred tree and the pillar (*maššebe*) were legitimate in the Yahwistic cult early on, and were not considered illegitimate in the time of the Yahwist or Elohist.”<sup>55</sup> Thus the biblical texts clearly show that there is no syncretism with the “Canaanite” cult, and that Asherah was a legitimate member of the Israelite pantheon from its earliest times. Conversely, Day concludes that YHWH and El are syncretistic, rather than one god known by different appellations.<sup>56</sup> Day states that “It is interesting that the Old Testament has no qualms in equating Yahweh with El, something which stands in marked contrast to its vehement opposition to Baal (cf. Hos. 2.18).”<sup>57</sup> This opinion does not take into consideration the

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<sup>53</sup> As is outlined in Niehr, “‘Israelite’ Religion and ‘Canaanite’ Religion,” 23-25. Such a view is misguided, as it seeks a point of origin in Israelite history which separates the biblical constructs ‘Israelite’ and ‘Canaanite’; C.L. Crouch, *The Making of Israel: Cultural Diversity in the Southern Levant and the Formation of Ethnic Identity in Deuteronomy*, (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 114-164; Francesca Stavrakopoulou, “‘Popular’ Religion and ‘Official’ Religion,” in *Religious Diversity in Ancient Israel and Judah*, 37-50; Wyatt notes that “there is no justification for ideas of ‘foreignness’ about the Canaanite elements in religion in Palestine. Israel and Judah are to be seen as wholly within that cultural tradition. Historically speaking, it is their emergence from it which is striking (though often overstated) rather than its inherently alien nature.” Wyatt, “Asherah,” 189.

<sup>54</sup> As is demonstrated by Zevit, *The Religions of Ancient Israel*, 611-690; Crouch, *The Making of Israel*, 112-132; Niehr, “‘Israelite’ Religion and ‘Canaanite’ Religion,” 23-28.

<sup>55</sup> Olyan, *Asherah and the Cult of Yahweh in Israel*, 5.

<sup>56</sup> Day, *Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan*, 14; contra Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, 44-75. Cross uses semantic rather than archaeological argument to determine the connection between El and YHWH, 73.

<sup>57</sup> Day, *Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan*, 14. Day is also of the opinion that Asherah was YHWH’s consort and held a legitimate position in the Israelite cult: “What was this relationship? The obvious conclusion that comes to mind is one of a god and his consort. This becomes a near certainty when it is recalled that in Canaanite religion Asherah was the consort of El and that the Old Testament equates Yahweh and El... this equation led to Yahweh’s appropriation of the sons of god (El), the notion of Yahweh as an aged and wise god, and also – though the Old Testament rejects this – the association of Yahweh with bull

heterogeneous nature of Israelite cultic practice. Ephraim Stern has noted that the material culture relating to worship of the high gods of Israel and the surrounding 'nations' has striking similarities. Although these deities were known by different appellations, they all also have the same consort – Asherah.<sup>58</sup> Stern draws the conclusion from this that many 'houses of YHWH' were spread across Israel and Judah.<sup>59</sup> This is indisputable. What is also implied by this however is that these high gods are analogous in all but name, suggesting a common ancestry at a much earlier point in their development. It is clear from the development of the cult and its terminology,<sup>60</sup> when also considering the ideological construct that came to identify itself as 'Israel', that any separation between YHWH and El that is represented in the biblical texts is also implicated in this construct.

#### **VI.iv. Kuntillet 'Ajrud and Khirbet el Qom**

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The inscriptions on pithoi A and B at Kuntillet 'Ajrud were discovered in 1975-6 by Ze'ev Meshel.<sup>61</sup> The complex is often thought to have been a caravanserai or way station for merchants travelling between trading destinations,<sup>62</sup> although some have believed it to have been a religious complex.<sup>63</sup> The finds have been mentioned in almost every analysis of

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symbolism. Yahweh's appropriation of El's consort, Asherah, fits naturally into this schema, and like the bull symbolism, it was something which the Old Testament rejected." 60.

<sup>58</sup> Ephraim Stern, "Religion in Palestine in the Assyrian and Persian Periods," in *The Crisis of Israelite Religion. Transformation of Religious Tradition in Exilic and Post-Exilic Times*, edited by Bob Becking and Marjo C.A. Korpel, (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 245-246.

<sup>59</sup> Stern, "Religion in Palestine in the Assyrian and Persian Periods," 246-248.

<sup>60</sup> As is outlined by Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism*, 135-166.

<sup>61</sup> A recap of Meshel's findings can be found in Ze'ev Meshel, "Kuntillet 'Ajrud, An Israelite Religious Center in Northern Sinai," *Expedition* (Summer, 1978), 50-54; Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah*, 106; Zevit, *The Religions of Ancient Israel*, 370.

<sup>62</sup> Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah*, 115-120.

<sup>63</sup> This was Meshel's original supposition, "Kuntillet 'Ajrud, An Israelite Religious Center in Northern Sinai," 54. He states that "'Ajrud cannot be considered a usual wayside fortress like those in the Negev Highlands, nor even an ordinary caravanserai... but above and beyond any secular purpose, it undoubtedly had a religious function... neither can it be considered a temple." Meshel concludes that Kuntillet 'Ajrud therefore functioned

the goddess Asherah ever since.<sup>64</sup> The finds from Kuntillet 'Ajrud and Khirbet el Qom, along with the JPFs, indicate the portable and widespread nature of worship of Asherah. Such portability lends itself to the easy establishment of places of worship – a state which is reflected in the inscriptions from Kuntillet 'Ajrud and Khirbet el Qom, whose status as specific cultic places is heavily debated.

The pithoi are engraved with rather enigmatic inscriptions. Hadley has translated the three pieces of text from the pithoi as follows:<sup>65</sup>

Inscription 1:

X says: say to Yehal[lēl'el] and to Yo'asah and [to Z]: I bless you by Yahweh of Samaria and by his Asherah.

Inscription 2 (written vertically across the right side of the drawings):

Amaryau says: say to my lord: Is it well with you? I bless you by Yahweh of Teman and by his Asherah. May he bless you and keep you and be with my lord...

Inscription 3:

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as a "wayside shrine," a conclusion with which Hadley disagrees, favouring the caravanserai explanation for the site's purpose instead. Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah*, 108-120. Zevit also favours the cultic installation hypothesis, arguing against the caravanserai on the basis of the apparent lack of either storage space for goods, or sleeping quarters. He also considers the decoration on the walls of the structure as too ornate and delicate for a way-station. He makes a persuasive point, however confesses himself that there is no obvious cultic paraphernalia such as an altar at the site either. Zevit, *The Religions of Ancient Israel*, 374 and n. 47. An assessment of the site as religious does not fit the classification set out in Renfrew, *The Archaeology of Cult*, 14-21. The presence of religious art does not make the site in itself cultic.

<sup>64</sup> For example the large section dedicated to these and the finds at Khirbet el Qom in Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah*, 84-155; Day, *Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan*, 49-52; There is a chapter by Dijkstra dedicated to the topic in *Only One God? – "I Have Blessed you by YHWH of Samaria and his Asherah: Texts with Religious Elements from the Soil Archive of Ancient Israel,"* 17-44, in which volume the finds are mentioned several more times, albeit briefly. Korpel states that "One should not exaggerate the importance of these finds because they are outweighed by several blessings in the name of YHWH alone." Marjo Korpel, "Asherah Outside Israel," in *Only One God?*, 147; References to these finds are scattered throughout Olyan, *Asherah and the Cult of Yahweh in Israel*; and also throughout Smith, *The Early History of God*, in particular 108-147. Smith notes the particular Judahite nature of the inscriptions and of the particular focus on the asherah, 124.

<sup>65</sup> Following Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah*, 121 and 125. Hutton sees a slight difference in the personal names in the inscriptions, but does not note any difference in the translation of the deities' names or the grammatical constructs in which they are couched, Jeremy M. Hutton, "Local Manifestations of Yahweh and Worship in the Interstices: A Note on Kuntillet 'Ajrud," *JANER* 10.2 (2010), 190-191. The translations of the inscriptions in the final report from the site are very similar to those rendered here, with some slight differences in the rendering of the names, and translation of 'by' as 'to' in inscription number 1. Shmuel Ahituv, Esther Eshel and Ze'ev Meshel, "The Inscriptions," in *Kuntillet 'Ajrud (Horvat Teman)*, 87, 95, 98.

Whatever he asks from a man, may it be favoured... and let Yahw(eh) give unto him as he wishes (according to his heart).

Hadley has omitted the first line of inscription number 3, which the final report from the site has rendered as “to YHWH of the Tēmān and His *asherah*.”<sup>66</sup> The exact purpose of these inscriptions is unclear, and some scholars have speculated that they were practice texts for a travelling scribe.<sup>67</sup> The pithoi are also inscribed with a number of pictures, the most notable of which are two troll-like figures,<sup>68</sup> a seated lyre player, a cow suckling a calf, a failed attempt at a cow or bull, and two ibexes consuming a tree depicted above a lion. Given the ad-hoc nature of the engravings and the attempts at certain representations, it is likely that the area in question was occasionally used for practice by travelling scribes,<sup>69</sup> or that it was not considered an important enough space to need to exercise caution and accuracy in inscription. This supports the notion that the complex at Kuntillet ‘Ajrud was a way-station rather than a religious installation.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Ahituv, Eshel and Meshel, “The Inscriptions,” 98.

<sup>67</sup> Zevit does not consider any of the drawings on the pithoi as overly sophisticated. He notes that some of them are reminiscent of the work of someone unused to the perspective necessary in art, but also notes that they appear to be what could be considered conventional symbols. Zevit, *The Religions of Ancient Israel*, 381-385. Emerton also feels that there is “insufficient reason” to consider both the inscriptions and pictographs as the product of the one scribe, J.A. Emerton, “‘Yahweh and His Asherah’: The Goddess or Her Symbol?,” VT 49.3 (1999), 319; *contra* Schmidt, who determines that the inscriptions and pictographs should be considered as a whole, Schmidt, “The Iron Age *Pithoi* from Horvat Teman or Kuntillet ‘Ajrud,” in particular 98: “Not only were the ancient artist and the ancient scribe one and the same, but this individual employed a number of well known artistic techniques to convey both depth of field and perspective in such a way as to create a unified field of meaning for each of the two pithoi scenes individually as well as for both scenes when viewed as two complementary halves of a larger semiotic whole.”

<sup>68</sup> Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah*, 137-144. Zevit assumes that these figures are representations of Bes, *The Religions of Ancient Israel*, 385-389.

<sup>69</sup> Beck considers it most likely that the inscriptions were “route prayers” for travellers stopping at the site, Pirhiya Beck, “The Drawings from Horvat Teiman (Kuntillet ‘Ajrud),” *Tel Aviv* 9 (1982), 46. These hypotheses have all been refuted by Schmidt, who considers the drawings and inscriptions on both pithoi as a unified, finished work, “The Iron Age *Pithoi* from Horvat Teman or Kuntillet ‘Ajrud.” Since the release of the final report on the site in 2012 Schmidt has amended his position on the pithos drawings, and now considers that they were draft works for art which was later reproduced in full on the walls of the site. Brian B. Schmidt, “Did God Have a Wife? The Kuntillet ‘Ajrud Inscriptions from Sinai,” (paper presented at the 2014 Alan Crown Lecture, (Sydney: Mandelbaum House, May 8 2014).

<sup>70</sup> Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah*, 108-120; Meshel, “Kuntillet ‘Ajrud, An Israelite Religious Center in Northern Sinai,” 54.; *contra* Zevit, *The Religions of Ancient Israel*, 374 and n. 47.

The primary discussion centred on the pithoi from Kuntillet 'Ajrud focuses on establishing a meaning for the term *l'šrth* in the inscription on pithos A. The general consensus is that this does in fact refer to the goddess Asherah,<sup>71</sup> with some suggesting that it refers instead to the cultic symbol of the asherah, citing the one next to the altar in the Jerusalem Temple as precedence. One is hard pressed to find a scholar who disagrees that this is somehow linked with the cult of Asherah in one way or another.<sup>72</sup>

There has been much discussion regarding the linkage between Yahweh and Asherah/ the asherah in the inscription, and whether or not the pictographs on the same pithos are somehow related to the inscription. Do they illustrate the inscription in some way? Some have made an argument for this, citing details in the picture – such as the second figure planting (its?) foot in the footprint of the first – that could indicate that the two figures are husband and wife.<sup>73</sup> This supports the theory that in this context the inscription is referring to the goddess Asherah, who is the consort/wife of the god Yahweh (of Samaria).<sup>74</sup> Margalit claims that the term asherah itself can be translated as a word

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<sup>71</sup> Dever, *Did God Have a Wife?*, 132; Emerton, “‘Yahweh and His Asherah’: The Goddess or Her Symbol?,” 334; Olyan, *Asherah and the Cult of Yahweh*, 37, although Olyan admits that without other evidence such as that from the biblical texts, this conclusion would not be possible; Schmidt concludes that given the combination of pictographs and inscription, and despite the fact that “Yahweh and Asherah would not be imaged as the god Bes, or the couple, Bes and Beset” it is likely that YHWH and the Goddess are indeed the deities referred to here in conjunction. Schmidt, “The Iron Age *Pithoi* from Horvat Teman or Kuntillet 'Ajrud,” 97-98; Smith argues that while it is clear that at some stage Asherah was a popular goddess in ancient Israel, gradually language applicable to her and some aspects of her divine being were subsumed into the general overall understanding of YHWH. Smith, *The Early History of God*, 125-147. Smith also notes that taking the Kuntillet 'Ajrud evidence alone, without reference to any biblical or other extra-biblical material, it is impossible to come to any conclusions regarding the nature of Asherah represented there, or any possible connection between the goddess or her symbol and YHWH, 118-125.

<sup>72</sup> With the notable exception of Lemaire, *The Birth of Monotheism*, 62.

<sup>73</sup> Margalit, “The Meaning and Significance of Asherah,” 264-297, in particular 269.

<sup>74</sup> Margalit, “The Meaning and Significance of Asherah,” 277. He also states that “This hypothesis, if demonstrable, would explain the lack of explicit reference to Athirat's consortship as a redundancy eschewed by the Ugaritic poets, and at the same time extricate the Hebrew epigraphist from the horns of a dilemma at both Kh. el-Qom and Kuntillet 'Ajrud.” 269.

meaning, simply, 'wife.'<sup>75</sup> Others have postulated that the text and illustrations are completely unrelated, and indeed that the illustration depicts Bes figurines.<sup>76</sup> Bes' protective roll fits the location well. The figures are bovine in character: they have stumpy tails, long faces, and bovine ears. This is consistent with what is known of the tauromorph form that was commonly attributed to Yahweh, although in a depiction of Yahweh with his Asherah one would expect to see a bull with a tree (which is present in the other drawings on the pithos). Alternatively, the figures may indeed represent Bes and not stand in any particular relation to the inscriptions at all. However, with the release of the final report on the 'Ajrud excavations it has come to light that what was originally thought to have been a phallus on the second, smaller figure, was in fact ash smudging the artefact.<sup>77</sup> This smudge has previously been cited as evidence that the inscriptions were not related to the images,<sup>78</sup> but with the new evidence it is more likely that the text and image are linked.

The inscription from Khirbet el Qom has a similar motif to the ones from Kuntillet 'Ajrud. The inscription was illegally excavated and removed from a cave near the el Qom site. It is designated as number three. There are difficulties with the inscription in so far as the script has been made near illegible in some places by other lines which run through the

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<sup>75</sup> Margalit, "The Meaning and Significance of Asherah," 269. This is not supported by the BDB, 81, which states that אֲשֶׁרָה refers either to a Canaanite goddess or a sacred tree or pole.

<sup>76</sup> Philip J. King and Lawrence E. Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel*, (London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 351; Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses and Images of God*, 219; Kenton L. Sparks, *Ethnicity and Identity in Ancient Israel. Prolegomena to the Study of Ethnic Sentiments and Expression in the Hebrew Bible*, (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1998), 141, n.44; *contra* Schmidt, "The Aniconic Tradition," 100-102, who concludes that characteristics usually featured in representations of Bes and Beset are not present in the Kuntillet 'Ajrud drawings.

<sup>77</sup> As outlined in the final report on the excavations – Beck, "The Drawings and Decorative Designs," 165. While Beck is the author of this particular chapter, the observation can be attributed to Ze'ev Meshel, as sadly Pirhiya Beck passed away in 1998, well before the preparation of the report.

<sup>78</sup> That the second figure also appears to have breast markings has proved puzzling for scholarship. For example H. te Velde in *Dictionary of Deities and Demons*, who interprets the 'Ajrud drawings as "a male with a bisexual feminized variant." 332. A similar conclusion is drawn by Keel and Uehlinger in *Gods, Goddesses and Images of God*, 217-223.

rock. It is thought that these scratches may have been created by someone attempting to smooth the rock before inscribing it.<sup>79</sup> Just as the incomplete and ill-formed drawings on the pithoi from Kuntillet 'Ajrud suggest a certain casual nature about the inscription, it can also be concluded here that there was no great official sanction or overt importance invested upon the site.

The inscription reads:<sup>80</sup>

Uriyahu the rich wrote it.  
Blessed be Uriyahu by Yahweh  
for from his enemies by his asherah he has saved him.  
by Oniyahu  
by his asherah  
and by his a[she]rah

A full line-by-line analysis of this inscription has been undertaken by Hadley and is therefore unnecessary here.<sup>81</sup> The question that is of the most interest to this argument is whether this mention of Asherah refers to the goddess or to a cultic object, and further, if it was a cultic object did it serve a function in the cult of YHWH alone or was it an explicit allusion to the goddess of the same name? This inscription is significant in so far as it reinforces the impression given by the inscriptions from Kuntillet 'Ajrud that Asherah and YHWH were commonly associated in the cultic sphere in some way. Whether or not Asherah in this inscription refers to a goddess or a cultic symbol, there is still an overt link between the two deities attested through both of these sites.

Most scholars agree that the finds from both Kuntillet 'Ajrud and Khirbet el Qom are reflective of the link between YHWH and Asherah. Some scholars, such as Olyan, Patai, and Hadley, consider them as proof that Asherah was a goddess in ancient Israel and that she

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<sup>79</sup> Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah*, 84; Zevit, *The Religions of Ancient Israel*, 360.

<sup>80</sup> Following Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah*, 86.

<sup>81</sup> Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah*, 86-102.

was the consort of YHWH, used in these instances as reinforcement of his blessing and inextricably linked.<sup>82</sup> Others, such as Korpel and Lemaire, suggest that the nature of the finds is over-exaggerated and that the references to “‘his’ Asherah tend to diminish the independent status of the goddess, even in folk religion.”<sup>83</sup> Although most scholars agree that Asherah was a goddess who was worshipped in Israel *at some stage*,<sup>84</sup> it is unlikely that such polarised opinions as these will ever be completely reconciled. Overall, the inscriptions and their pictographical associations from Kuntillet ‘Ajrud and Khirbet el Qom remain enigmatic. Enough associations are extant to allow for a conclusion that YHWH and Asherah were *in some way* associated in the cults of Teman and Samaria.<sup>85</sup> They indicate the widespread nature of the reverence of YHWH and Asherah as a divine pair, and the prevalence of iconography associated with them.<sup>86</sup>

## VI.v. Judean Pillar-Based Figurines

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To date the most comprehensive study undertaken on Judean Pillar Figurines has been Raz Kletter’s doctoral dissertation *The Judean Pillar-Figurines and the Archaeology of Asherah*, in which he provides detailed reports of the types of JPFs, the locations in which they have been found, their composition and form, and also speculates on their function.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess*, 53; Olyan, *Asherah and the Cult of Yahweh in Israel*, 25-33; Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah*, 152-155; Day, *Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan*, 47-52.

<sup>83</sup> Korpel, “Asherah Outside Israel,” 147. Korpel does not debate the validity of the goddess, merely her efficacy. He does not see a reason to consider her as part of the official cult in monarchic Israel or Judah, 150; Lemaire, *The Birth of Monotheism*, 62.

<sup>84</sup> For example Korpel who details the evolution of the religion of the Canaanite area. He argues that the cult progressed from the divine couple El and Asherah heading the pantheon, to Baal and Anat coming to the fore in later years. At this point Asherah was subsumed into the Anat/Ashtart combination and lost her own identity as a separate deity. Korpel, “Asherah Outside Israel,” 127-150.

<sup>85</sup> And therefore also in Israel and Judah.

<sup>86</sup> This has been noted by Stern, “Religion in Palestine in the Assyrian and Persian Periods,” 248-249.

<sup>87</sup> Raz Kletter, *The Judean Pillar-Figurines*.

These figures have been uncovered in the archaeological findings from Iron IIc throughout the Judahite area.<sup>88</sup> It is highly likely that they were representative of the goddess Asherah, as is demonstrated by Kletter.<sup>89</sup> Several theories have been forwarded regarding the possible identity of the woman represented by the figures, and the purpose that they might have served. Kletter has dealt fairly comprehensively with all of these.<sup>90</sup>

The various interpretations are as follows:

- As benevolent ‘magic’ icons to aid in fertility, considered ‘benevolent’ on the basis that they are smiling;
- As representations of the goddesses Anat or Astarte, both associated in some way with fertility;<sup>91</sup> however, it is more likely that the JPFs are representations of the goddess Asherah.<sup>92</sup>
- It has also been suggested that the size and shape of the figurines made them perfect for gripping in the hand during childbirth – presumably in the hopes of some sort of blessing.<sup>93</sup> More pertinently, the flattish bellies on the figurines and the emphasis on the

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<sup>88</sup> Kletter provides a complete catalogue of types of JPFs and each site at which they were found in his “Appendix 1,” *The Judean Pillar-Figurines*, 135-176.

<sup>89</sup> Kletter, *The Judean Pillar-Figurines*, 25-27.

<sup>90</sup> Kletter, *The Judean Pillar-Figurines*.

<sup>91</sup> Although in this case the arguments are unconvincing: Keel and Uehlinger discuss the association of these figurines with Asherah, and why it is not applicable to see cross-identification or syncretism with any other goddesses for Judahite evidence – Astarte or Tinnit for example. It would *have* to be for Asherah. But also, why the verbs used to indicate destruction of the biblical *asherim* do not apply to these figures – they would have to be ‘smashed’, not ‘cut down and burned.’ Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses and Images of God*, 334-335. This does not mean that the Pillar Figurines did not represent Asherah: Keel and Uehlinger note that there may have been stages in Judahite worship practices during which it was either unacceptable, or popular, to represent Asherah in anthropomorphic form. The figurines are representative of a period during which such representations were popular, while the verbs used in reference to *asherim* in the biblical texts are from a time during which it was not. *Gods, Goddesses and Images of God*, 335-336.

<sup>92</sup> Keel and Uehlinger consider it most likely that the JPFs represent Asherah and not another goddess, such as Astarte, who does not appear to have been widely known in Judah at that time, *Gods, Goddesses and Images of God*, 334-336; Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess*, 35-39; Dever, *Did God Have a Wife?*, 176-185.

<sup>93</sup> Rainer Albertz, “Personal Piety,” in *Religious Diversity in Ancient Israel and Judah*, 142. Albertz considers the JPFs to be mediative artefacts rather than direct representations of a goddess.

engorged breasts has led some scholars to conclude that the figures represent pregnancies successfully carried to term, and place further emphasis on the role of the mother as the one who suckles the infant and provides further sustenance and growth.<sup>94</sup> That they could have been representations of mortal women, however, is dismissed by Kletter.<sup>95</sup> Their features do give the notion of plentiful breast milk, which is consistent with the concept of a fertility goddess, and of Asherah.<sup>96</sup>

- That the JPFs were the biblical *teraphim*, as discussed by Dever. He argues that the term *teraphim* (תרפים) occurs fifteen times in the biblical texts. Of Gen. 31:33-5 - Rachel hiding the *teraphim* - Dever states specifically that

this passage implies several things about the images of the gods in the patriarchal stories. (1) They are plural, representing several deities. (2) They are associated with traditional nomadic lifestyles and were therefore portable. (3) They represent the ancestral deities (or deified ancestors?) of the clan – their continuing ‘presence’ in the family group – and thus they were among the most valuable of the family’s possessions. (4) They were small enough for a hoard of them to be concealed under a woman’s lap. (5) Finally, they may have been principally in the custodianship of women.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Bloch-Smith surmises that due to the physical characteristics of the figures they may have been intended to “beseech adequate lactation to sustain newborns and infants.” They were therefore not intended to benefit the dead in any way, but were to aid in the sustenance of life and growth. Elizabeth Bloch-Smith, *Judahite Burial Practices and Beliefs about the Dead*, JSOT Supplement Series 123, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992), 98.

<sup>95</sup> “The possibility that the JPFs represented mortal figures of ‘fertility’ does not fit the lack of pregnancy, children and rendering of the pubic area. Finally, understanding the JPFs as mortal women does not solve our problem. It gives a title, but not the meaning. Who exactly were these women? Why were they represented in large quantities? How do we explain their distribution in all sorts of contexts?” Kletter, *The Judean Pillar-Figurines*, 73-74.

<sup>96</sup> That the figures were talismans intended to protect women during pregnancy and birth was forwarded by Albright as early as 1942. William Foxwell Albright, *Archaeology and the Religion of Israel*, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1946), 114-115. The link between power and fertility is noted by Keel and Uehlinger in *Gods, Goddesses and Images of God*. They stress in particular the symbol of the mother animal suckling her young, but note that, in Judah at least, during the transition from Iron I to Iron II this symbol became streamlined into a tree, gradually lost its power, and was eventually subsumed into the language used to express attributes of YHWH, 128-131.

<sup>97</sup> Dever, *Did God Have a Wife?*, 181-182; Patai also equates the JPFs with biblical *teraphim*. Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess*, 39.

All of this is in accord with the discovery sites of the JPFs, in private homes rather than in cultic situations. This does not make certain the notion that the JPFs were in fact *teraphim*, but rather gives precedence to their cultic function in the home rather than the shrine or temple. If nothing else, it attests to the presence of such things in the home, and increases the likelihood that reverence of the goddess Asherah had a widespread household component.

- The only non-fertility based theory is that the JPFs were toys, which has been generally dismissed out of hand.<sup>98</sup> While Renfrew cautions against the misinterpretation of objects as either toys or cultic items,<sup>99</sup> in this instance it is more likely that these figures do not represent toys due to the nature of their construction and decoration. Most of the detail is on the front of the figurines, and Raz Kletter has determined that this one-sidedness in detail is proof that they were not in any way intended to be toys, as it is not indicative of something intended to be used in 'dynamic play'. Nor are the figures made of superior clay or fired very well, as would have been necessary in order for them to handle being played with by children, and which quality of construction would have been possible for the Israelites at the time. The cheap clay and poor firing methods used in the construction of the JPFs would see them smashed very quickly by a child.<sup>100</sup>

There are two types of these figurines. One third of the excavated figurines are entirely handmade, while two thirds of those that have been uncovered have moulded heads attached to the bodies - common characteristics are large almond eyes and tight 'teardrop' curls. There is emphasis on full breasts, often hanging down, supported by thick

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<sup>98</sup> Kletter, *The Judean Pillar-Figurines*, 73. Dever agrees, noting that there is no significant pattern to indicate their exact purpose, but that they were "certainly not 'toys'." Dever, *Did God have a Wife?*, 181.

<sup>99</sup> Renfrew, *The Archaeology of Cult*, 14-15, 20-21.

<sup>100</sup> Kletter, *The Judean Pillar-Figurines*, 73.

arms. Some show evidence of having been painted, at least on defining features – for example, on the moulded ornamentation on the figures. Dever is convinced that there are ‘about 3000’ JPFs, but Kletter thinks only 854.<sup>101</sup> The first type have a head and neck stem which is cast in a mould, often with big almond eyes and tight curls. In very rare instances they have some decoration, like a diadem in their hair. They were attached to a hand-moulded body by pushing the clay down with the fingers. The second type are entirely hand-moulded. There is considerably less detail on this type, which is to be expected. They are about the same size as the first type, but their facial features are created by taking the fingers and thumb and poking eyes in while drawing the nose out. This variety accounts for approximately one third of all documented finds. According to Keel and Uehlinger, “There is no question that the cruder and probably less expensive type with pinched faces was *produced locally*, based on the location where the pieces have been found.”<sup>102</sup>

According to Hadley, “It is possible that the ‘pinched-nose’ heads were made by or for people who had no access to the moulded heads.”<sup>103</sup> Only two moulds have been found in Judah – one from Lachish and another from Beth-Shemesh. Four have been found at Megiddo – perhaps the heads were made there and exported, and later attached to locally made bodies, as has been suggested by Albright.<sup>104</sup> Keel and Uehlinger are not aware of any neutron-activation analysis that has been undertaken on what they call the ‘little heads’. Nor is there any evidence of this to date. It is therefore hard to determine any definitive origin for them. However, Keel and Uehlinger conclude that “We may nevertheless

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<sup>101</sup> Dever, *Did God have a Wife?*, 180; Kletter, *The Judean Pillar-Figurines*, 38. It is clear that Kletter is using a much more strict method of classification than that employed by Dever, which Dever freely admits.

<sup>102</sup> Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses and Images of God*, 325, original italics.

<sup>103</sup> Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah*, 236

<sup>104</sup> Albright, “Astarte Plaques and Figurines from Tel Beit – Mirsim,” *Melanges Syriens offerts a monsieur René Daussaud*, (Paris: Librairie Geuthner, 1939), 120, as cited in Kletter, *The Judean Pillar-Figurines and the Archaeology of Asherah*, 53.

confidently assume that production of the bodies, as well as the assembly of the pillar figurines was carried out in Palestine, and most specifically, in Judah itself.”<sup>105</sup> It is difficult to determine how unfired heads could have been successfully transported from outside Judah to be later attached to local bodies, and Raz Kletter, as part of his doctoral study made a large number of the ‘pinched-nose’ version, and quite a few of them broke in his car during transport.<sup>106</sup> As it is highly unlikely that a merchant would transport unfired heads, Kletter’s findings must be taken into consideration and a local origin for the figurines must be sought. Such an origin implies a local industry and market.

The findings are primarily from private homes, rather than from tombs or cultic sites.

According to Keel and Uehlinger,

Close to half the houses that have been excavated at Tell Beit-Mirsim and at Beer-Sheba have had terra-cottas that might have served a function in a house cult. Not always, but very often, these have been pillar figurines. As far as the often inadequate classification and publication of the sites allows us to determine, no more than one figurine was found per house in the Judahite private homes.<sup>107</sup>

There is also very little evidence of them in burial sites. Keel and Uehlinger identify them as some sort of ‘household icon’, possibly similar or comparable to the biblical *teraphim*, and state that “They assume the same role in personal and family piety during Iron Age IIc that was played by the plaques and the representations of the goddess during the Late Bronze Age and Iron Age I.”<sup>108</sup> The assumption has thus been made that they are cultic in nature, although their similarity to the *teraphim* alone would suggest this. Such portability would

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<sup>105</sup> Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses and Images of God*, 327.

<sup>106</sup> Kletter, *The Judean Pillar-Figurines*, 102.

<sup>107</sup> Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses and Images of God*, 328. Dever agrees that the figurines are mostly found in private homes and rarely in tombs or cultic sites. “We are led to conclude that the female figures have more to do with household than with community cults, more with ongoing life events than with death and funerary rituals.” Dever, *Did God Have a Wife?*, 180-181.

<sup>108</sup> Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses and Images of God*, 328-329.

enable worship of the goddess to be undertaken in multiple locations, which attests to the threat posed by such figures to any policy of cultic centralisation.

It has been suggested that the pillar-base of the figurines is representative of a tree-trunk and can therefore be associated with an amalgamation of the goddess Asherah and her tree.<sup>109</sup> However, as will be demonstrated below, the link between Asherah and the symbol of the tree is not as certain as has previously been believed. Keel and Uehlinger disagree with the tree association for the JPFs, stating quite clearly that

The hollow pedestals of the figurines do not really provide evidence that anyone understood them to be trees, tree trunks, or cultic poles. Viewed purely functionally, this style represents a technical development of the solid pillar-body or bell-shaped body that provides the figurines with greater stability.<sup>110</sup>

There is certainly no extraneous evidence to support this tree association for the JPFs.

It is true that JPFs are not necessarily exclusive to Judah, although the Judahite ones are certainly the most prolific. Pillar figurines have been discovered in other areas – northern Israel, Phoenicia, Philistia and the Transjordan. Holladay believes that they were originally of northern origin, but they are clearly a form of cultic practice (of some description) in Judah, perhaps even primarily so, during Iron IIc.<sup>111</sup> However, this is not necessarily self evident, as is indicated by the plethora of theories surrounding their identity and use, and especially as they have been discovered in household, rather than cultic settings. Keel and Uehlinger have argued that the majority of figurines are from the 8<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Kletter describes this association as “completely baseless”, *The Judean Pillar-Figurines*, 77. He considers the pillar shape of the figurines to have been purely functional.

<sup>110</sup> Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses and Images of God*, 332-333.

<sup>111</sup> John S. Holladay Jr., “Religion in Israel and Judah Under the Monarchy: An Explicitly Archaeological Approach,” in *Ancient Israelite Religion. Essays in Honor of Frank Moore Cross*, edited by Patrick D. Miller Jr., Paul D. Hanson and S. Dean McBride, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 280; Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses and Images of God*, 327.

centuries, and not earlier.<sup>112</sup> Previous findings have been based on atypical figures, not the more common ones. They state specifically that

Pillar figurines, or fragments of such, are first found in contexts that can be dated with confidence and/or in significant numbers, in the north as well as the south, toward the end of the eighth century (Beth-Shemesh, Samaria E207, Jerusalem cave 1, and elsewhere), but are clearly still in use in the second half of the seventh century.<sup>113</sup>

It is very difficult to pinpoint the origin of such a trend as the JPFs, but there appear to be no “transitional forms” according to Keel and Uehlinger, who associate them with a revival of ‘Canaanite’ practices, and as an ‘outside’ force. “It (the JPF phenomenon) might be at least indirectly related to the Assyrian invasions, to the new territorial divisions, and to *the related changes in market forces*.”<sup>114</sup> They also ask the question, assuming outside influence say, from Phoenicia: “If there was a Phoenician influence, why did it find an echo specifically in Judah, one that so quickly led to the pillar figurines becoming a typical requisite of Judean personal piety?”<sup>115</sup> In his observations regarding the figurines, Byrne notes that not only does the wide dispersal pattern throughout Judah suggest that there was a certain amount of acceptance of these figurines by the bureaucratic elite, but that there may even have been a modicum of state sanction for the political message encouraged by them.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses and Images of God*, 327-328. Kletter also dates the majority of the figures to the 8<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> centuries, although he concedes that it is difficult to provide a more specific date or to separate the JPFs of different centuries, Kletter, *The Judean Pillar-Figurines*, 41. While arguing for a rather broad spread in dating, beginning with the 10<sup>th</sup> century BCE, Engle placed the majority of figurines in the 8<sup>th</sup> century, extending into the 7<sup>th</sup>. James Robert Engle, “Pillar Figurines of Iron Age Israel and Asherah/Asherim,” (PhD diss., University of Pittsburgh, 1979), 18-26. He has also noted that the majority of JPFs have been found in locations belonging to the southern kingdom and during the divided monarchy, 25.

<sup>113</sup> Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses and Images of God*, 328.

<sup>114</sup> Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses and Images of God*, 329, my italics.

<sup>115</sup> Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses and Images of God*, 329.

<sup>116</sup> Byrne, “Lie Back and Think of Judah: The Reproductive Politics of Pillar Figurines,” *Near Eastern Archaeology* 67:3 (2004), 140-142. Byrne states that “Political agendas of social reproduction frequently respond to real and perceived threats to communal existence, and these agendas often imprint themselves into material culture. In the case of late Iron II Judah, the threat was real.” 142. The wide distribution of figurines throughout Judah has also been noted by Stern, “Religion in Palestine in the Assyrian and Persian Periods,” 250-253.

According to Byrne, the figurines had a major role to play in the political and economic life of Judah.

The one thing that is made very clear through a study of the JPFs is that in ancient Israel, during the time of the monarchy, there was widespread worship of a goddess throughout the entire area. Portable iconographic representations of the deity were involved in this worship, and had a place in the ritual practices of the people that was not centred on a cult place but rather on the home. Such a practice could only have been inimical to a reform which endeavoured to bring all worship to one central location. For if worship of Asherah was conducted in the home then the tithes, cakes and libations dedicated to her would have benefited only the homeowner.<sup>117</sup> That reverence of such a goddess was legitimate is reinforced by the inscriptions from Kuntillet 'Ajrud and Khirbet el Qom, which demonstrate the part that this goddess played in the official and wider cult, as well as the smaller household ones.

## VI.vi. The Representation of Asherah as a Tree

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It is commonly believed that the symbol of the goddess Asherah, the asherah, was a tree – whether a living tree or stylised wooden object.<sup>118</sup> This is reflected in the English

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<sup>117</sup> As is indicated in Jeremiah 44:17-19. Renfrew has noted that such activities are an integral part of classifying an activity as cultic, Renfrew, *The Archaeology of Cult*, 16.

<sup>118</sup> The wooden nature of *asherim* is discussed by Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah*, 60; Day, *Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan*, 53-57. Day argues for the wooden nature of *asherim* as opposed to either living trees or ceramic objects; Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess*, 38; Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses and Images of God*, 231-232. If asherahs were made of stone or metal there is a much higher chance of archaeological discovery, which has not been the case. The texts confirm that they were erected next to altars and in the immediate proximity of *mašseboth* of which a large number have been uncovered. No sign of the poles, with the possible exception of the circles of ash in front of or next to the *mašseboth* remain, such as those from Tel Kitan, Emmanuel Eisenberg, "Kitan, Tel," in *The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land*, Volume 3, edited by Ephraim Stern, Ayelet Lewinson-Gilboa and Joseph Aviram, (Jerusalem: The Israel

translation of *אשרה* as ‘sacred post’,<sup>119</sup> which is the result of references in the text to *asherim* being ‘cut down’ and ‘burned’. However, as Wiggins has demonstrated, there are only two direct references in the biblical text which could imply that an asherah was a tree – Deut. 16:21 and Judg. 6:25.<sup>120</sup> This view is represented well by Keel and Uehlinger:

In the Old Testament the term *‘āšērāh* (plural *‘āšērîm*) refers to a *cultic object* as a rule. The biblical texts never actually describe this object, except to say that it was made of wood, that it was ‘made’ or ‘set up,’ which suggests that it is an artefact ([‘to] plant’ in Deut 16:21 might be understood as using this verb in its transferred meaning); conversely, it could be “torn out,” “cut down,” and “burned.” For this reason, this cultic object is usually conceived of as being in the shape of a stylized tree, just as it is pictured, among other places, on Pithos A from Kuntillet ‘Ajrud. The frequently discussed connection between the goddess and the stylized tree in the history of the traditions supports this idea.<sup>121</sup>

However, Keel and Uehlinger’s view is not shared by everyone. Wiggins contests the association of *asherim* and trees, not to say that they were not compatible or that *asherim* did not take the form of a tree or wooden pole, but that two passages in which this suggestion is made does not constitute a solid foundation for the theory.<sup>122</sup> That they can be ‘cut down’ and ‘burned’ is not a conclusive argument in favour of this association. In the biblical texts many non-wooden things are ‘cut’ (*כרת*)<sup>123</sup> and ‘burned’ (*שרף*), as is demonstrated conclusively by Wiggins.<sup>124</sup> In 2 Kings 13:6 *אשרה* is again commonly translated as ‘sacred post’, and supports the notion that, at some stage at least, an asherah

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Exploration Society, 1993), 880; Smith, *The Early History of God*, 112. Smith observes that “To date, no convincing examples of an asherah have been excavated, an understandable state of affairs since biblical accounts of asherah describe it as made of wood.”

<sup>119</sup> As in the case of the Jewish Publication Society translation.

<sup>120</sup> Wiggins, “Of Asherahs and Trees,” 186.

<sup>121</sup> Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses and Images of God*, 231-232.

<sup>122</sup> Wiggins, “Of Asherahs and Trees,” 186.

<sup>123</sup> This is most famously known in reference to the cutting of covenants. Some of the many passages which use *כרת* in this context are: Gen. 15:18, 31:44; Ex. 23:32 (in the negative, *לא־תכרת*, similarly in passages such as Ex. 34:12, 15), Ex. 34:10; Deut. 5:2, 3, 29:13; 1 Sam. 23:18; 2 Kings 11:17.

<sup>124</sup> Wiggins, “Of Asherahs and Trees,” 165-168. Wiggins states that “To rely on the conclusion that the asherah is wooden to prove the point that *כרת* indicates a wooden object is a circular argumentation.” 165.

stood in the Temple in Jerusalem.<sup>125</sup> The terms used to justify the notion that *asherim* were trees – גִּדְע, נָטַע, שָׂרַף, כָּרַת – are also commonly used in conjunction with other items and therefore cannot be employed as conclusive evidence in this case.<sup>126</sup> However, this reasoning and these verbs do not necessarily also apply to the *maššeba*, which was stone. Wiggins notes that Deut. 16:21, along with verses 20 and 22 prohibiting the erection of *maššebboth* and improper sacrifice, are geared towards centralisation as their goal as they were prohibiting the establishment of *bāmôth* by condemning the individual elements thereof (a tree or sacred pole, a *maššeba*, the sacrificial practices that would be carried out there, and an altar to YHWH).<sup>127</sup> Such prohibitions would be necessary in order to promote or enforce centralisation.

It is evident from both the biblical texts and the available archaeological evidence that these ‘sacred poles’ were associated with both Asherah and YHWH.<sup>128</sup> The symbiosis between a deity and their symbol is demonstrated through the opening of the mouth ceremony conducted on iconography which was to represent the deity.<sup>129</sup> That the sacred pole was in some way associated with YHWH is clear, but the speculation that it becomes

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<sup>125</sup> As asserted by Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism*, 74; Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess*, 38.

<sup>126</sup> Wiggins has undertaken a detailed examination of the verbs associated with the destruction of the *asherim* and while these are often connected with wooden objects the evidence does not allow for a definite conclusion that the *asherim* were necessarily wooden. Wiggins, “Of Asherahs and Trees,” 164-5. He states that “The qal of the verb כָּרַת is used to describe all kinds of severance, not simply the hewing of wood... Given this list of possibilities, the use of כָּרַת alone does not appear to provide a firm foundation for indicating that an asherah was made of wood.” 165. The same or similar arguments are applied by Wiggins to the other verbs used to refer to destruction of an asherah in the following pages of his article, 164-169.

<sup>127</sup> Wiggins, “Of Asherahs and Trees,” 167.

<sup>128</sup> Which is to say that Asherah and her iconography were associated with YHWH, not that YHWH was represented by *asherim*.

<sup>129</sup> Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism*, 182-188; Herbert Niehr, “In Search of YHWH’s Cult Statue in the First Temple,” in *The Image and the Book. Iconic Cults, Aniconism and the Rise of Book Religion in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, edited by Karel van der Toorn, (Leuven: Peeters, 1997), 76-78. The pervasive power of symbols is discussed by Izak Cornelius, “‘Trading Religions and ‘Visible Religion’ in the Ancient Near East,” in *Religions and Trade: Religious Formation, Transformation, and Cross-Cultural Exchange Between East and West*, edited by Peter Wick and Volker Rabens, (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 141-165.

representative of just another facet of YHWH is unpersuasive. If this were the case, Dtr would not have been so set on completely eliminating the asherah from the cult. Keel and Uehlinger, after having examined the archaeological data at their disposal, come to the following conclusion:

In our opinion, when discussing this question one cannot ignore the fact that, already since Iron Age I, the goddess was no longer simply being *represented* by her symbol(s), as had previously been the case, but that these symbols increasingly became important in their own right and could virtually almost become *substitutes* for her.<sup>130</sup>

In Deut. 16:21 כַּל-עֵץ is rendered ‘pole’ by the JPS translation, however a more direct translation is “any tree”.<sup>131</sup> This prohibition is coupled with one pertaining to *maššeboth*, which in itself presupposes the existence of these elements in the cult as well as non-centralised places of worship at which they might be erected (*bāmôth*). Deut. 16:21 also implicitly associates *maššeboth* with *asherim*. While there is evidence outside of the biblical texts to demonstrate that these were erected together at shrines, this evidence is often limited to the circles of ash found in front of *maššeboth*.<sup>132</sup> Whether these were the places

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<sup>130</sup> Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses and Images of God*, 233; Miller states that “It is clear that appellative changes did occur in the cultic realm, thus accounting for the likenesses between YHWH and El, right down to their common symbol of a calf or bull. This could be the very reason why Asherah is also the consort of YHWH – perhaps at some stage in the pre-history, YHWH was synonymous with El and then later emerged as a separate entity.” Miller, *The Religion of Ancient Israel*, 25; Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, 44-75.

<sup>131</sup> Wiggins, “Of Asherahs and Trees,” 166-168; Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism*, 47; Patai, writing earlier, would not settle on the explanation of a post or tree so easily. He stated that “a careful perusal of the numerous references to the ‘Asherahs’ seems to indicate that they were carved wooden images which were set up by implanting their base into the ground. In early times they often stood next to altars dedicated to Baal; later, a ‘statue of Asherah’ was set up in the Jerusalem Temple itself. The word Asherah in Biblical usage can thus refer either to the goddess herself or her image.” Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess*, 38. Patai does concede that the symbol was most likely wooden and carved in such a way as to “indicate clearly that it stood for the goddess.” 296, n.13. However, Wiggins has demonstrated that this assumption is based on verbs applied to the asherah being taken literally, while they are often employed in a figurative sense when referring to other objects. Wiggins, “Of Asherahs and Trees,” 164-165.

<sup>132</sup> Mettinger, *No Graven Image*, 151, n. 75; Vriezen details the find of a circle of ash in front of a *maššebea* at Tel Lachish which he interprets as the remains of an asherah. Karel Vriezen, “Archaeological Traces of Cult in Ancient Israel,” in *Only One God?*, 73-75. He concludes that “If the discovery of a pillar and of a heap of ashes near cultroom 49 in Tel Lachish can be interpreted as the remains of a *maššēbā* and of an “*šērā*, this does not necessarily contradict the hypothesis that the cult in that particular sanctuary was directed towards YHWH.

where *asherim* stood and were burnt, or whether they are the remains of sacrificial or votive fires, is a matter of debate. However, given the position of these ash deposits, only some of them can be considered to be viable candidates for *asherim*. If they were *asherim* they are more likely to have been erected next to *maššeboth*, not in front of them.<sup>133</sup> Mettinger has dealt extensively with the proliferation of *maššeboth* throughout not only Judah and Israel, but the entire Ancient Near East. He notes that while later Deuteronomistic polemic condemns the stones, the earlier passages related to the reform appear to leave them be. Deut. 16:21, by that reckoning, could be considered to pertain to a later stage of the reformation.<sup>134</sup>

Judges 6:25-27 is another example of Dtr's objections to *asherim* and other cultic practices that can be seen to have been incorporated into the DH. Presenting such objections as longstanding and important to the tribal history of a people gives them credence.<sup>135</sup> Narratives revealing evidence of non-centralised worship are acceptable in the pre-Temple histories, and can be used as a tool of propaganda to promote centralisation and reform as distinct from traditional cultic practice. Here, Gideon is instructed to use the wood of the Asherah as fuel in the burnt offering to YHWH. Narratives such as this provide a way of justifying the iconoclastic actions of the reformers, who engaged in the practice of

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Both YHWH and his Asherah may have been worshipped alongside each other, each with its own cult object." 74-75. Another example of this is the interspersed remains of *maššeboth* and burnt remains of what could have been *asherim* from Tel Kitan as noted by Emanuel Eisenberg, "Kitan, Tel," 880.

<sup>133</sup> For example the details of shrines in which *maššeboth* have been uncovered in Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses and Images of God in Ancient Israel*, 33-34, 51-53. That *asherim* are often considered to accompany *maššeboth* is noted by Mettinger, *No Graven Image*, 95-96, 151. He supports this argument by examining coins from Tyre which display trees planted next to standing stones. Mettinger also asserts that "Masseboth were an important phenomenon as late as the late pre-exilic period." Tryggve N.D. Mettinger, "Israelite Aniconism: Developments and Origins," in *The Image and the Book*, 202.

<sup>134</sup> Mettinger, *No Graven Image*, 140-197. Mettinger states, "That Israelite masseboth were later lumped together with iconic images as falling under interdict is due to a particular 'irony' of historical development since the veto on images owes much to the previous masseboth cult." 194.

<sup>135</sup> That this tribal history is in some ways fabricated by Dtr is noted by Crouch, *The Making of Israel*, 138-140.

burning the *asherim* of 'overturned' shrines. Josiah's reform is presented as heavily iconoclastic in this way.<sup>136</sup> This, therefore, functions as a device linking the past 'history' to Dtr's reforms. This passage is accentuating that this is what the common use of the asherah ought to be, as this is how it has always been. There is however nothing that links the tree itself with any gender of deity, but it is logical to presume that the tree came to represent a goddess, in order to replace the life-giving mother deity of the soil. Keel and Uehlinger discuss the archaeological evidence for such a shift, focusing on the depictions found in ANE sites.

This tree no longer represents a *Dea nutrix* but appears by itself, with no sexual identity, as its own unique form of numinous power. On the seal in illus. 180a, on a bone scaraboid from Megiddo Str. V, and on a limestone conoid from Acre from an unknown stratum, the two human figures no longer appear with their arms raised in worship. They seem to be touching the tree. This posture is shown on cylinder and stamp seals from the Middle Bronze Age on, as well as on Phoenician and northern Syrian reliefs and ivories from the Late Bronze Age on. The human figures are usually kings or genii, and their constellations show what they do to assure order in the cosmos.<sup>137</sup>

In relation to Judges 6:25-27, this demonstrates the link between the positioning of an altar beneath a sacred tree or pole, and the reason that Gideon was instructed to cut it down and burn it. This is an essential action in Dtr's campaign against all iconography and iconophilia (Judg. 3:7). It also reflected (and possibly justified) the late monarchic and Deuteronomistically influenced practice of burning the sacred poles and trees. "The depiction of the worshippers who flank the palm trees should probably be treated as relating to the cult that had holy trees such as these in the center of their worship."<sup>138</sup> Thus

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<sup>136</sup> 2 Kings 23 contains a long list of iconoclastic actions including the following: all iconography is taken from the Jerusalem Temple and burned in v.4, 'idolatrous' priests are 'suppressed' in v.5, the Asherah is also taken from the Temple and burned in v.6, shrines are defiled in v.8 along with Topheth, and graves are also defiled in v.16.

<sup>137</sup> Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses and Images of God*, 153.

<sup>138</sup> Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses and Images of God*, 153.

there is good reason to believe that both the official and ‘popular’ cults of Judah and Israel comprised these elements in conjunction. The need for stories such as those involving Gideon to speak out against such iconography only serves to certify this point. There would be no need for these texts had a centralised, monotheistic aniconistic cult already been extant in pre-exilic Judahite society.

## VI.vii. The Polemic Association of Asherah and Baal

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Crouch notes that the reason for the heavy condemnation of *asherim*, compared to the comparatively less severe condemnation of *maṣṣeboth* and *bāmôth*, is because *asherim* were semantically related to the goddess Asherah. Crouch states that “Even if the deity for whom the אֲשֵׁרָה was erected was יְהוָה, the similarity between an אֲשֵׁרָה cult directed toward or associated with יְהוָה and an אֲשֵׁרָה cult associated with a goddess Asherah is deeply ambiguous.”<sup>139</sup> Such associations necessitated a shift in perception from Asherah and YHWH to Asherah and an alternate deity. In Judges 3:7 Asherah and Baal are explicitly associated, or at least are portrayed as such. That this was an innovation is argued by Wyatt, who notes that according to the Ugaritic literature, Asherah was the traditional consort of El and not under any circumstances partnered with Baal.<sup>140</sup> This partnership with Baal becomes a theme of the Deuteronomistic polemic against Asherah. Here the term *Asheroth* (rendered אֲשֵׁרוֹת rather than the more common אֲשֵׁרִים, although אֲשֵׁרוֹת is technically grammatically correct)<sup>141</sup> lacks the definite article and therefore is likely to refer directly to

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<sup>139</sup> Crouch, *The Making of Israel*, 131.

<sup>140</sup> Wyatt, “Asherah,” 184-185.

<sup>141</sup> According to de Moor there are three instances of אֲשֵׁרִים and three of אֲשֵׁרוֹת in the Hebrew Bible. אֲשֵׁרִים occurs a further “10 times with the definite article, and 6 times with suffixes” making it the more common of the two plural forms utilised in the Bible. Johannes C. de Moor, “אֲשֵׁרָה”, in *Theological Dictionary of the Old*

the goddess, rather than her cultic object.<sup>142</sup> While this is not necessarily a given, it makes the function of the term in this particular text easier to discern. Although many of the stories in the book of Judges are considered to have a much earlier, northern origin, which the Deuteronomists reworked in order to integrate them into their history,<sup>143</sup> Judges 3:7 is most likely an editorial gloss,<sup>144</sup> supporting the Dtr polemic against Asherah and working it in to the history, grouping Asherah in with the other, ‘heathen,’ gods in order to discredit her. Hadley has conducted a brief discussion in this context on the verb עבד, ‘to serve’, which is a term most commonly used in association with the worship of rulers or deities. She also notes that this is not a passage that is commonly associated with Asherah.<sup>145</sup> Asherah does not conform to the monolatrous and centralised theology of Deuteronomistic Yahwism. Ostensibly, Dtr object to Asherah because her worship is conducted outside of the Temple – it is often very personal to women, during childbirth especially, and is not

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*Testament* אב־בדד, edited by G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1974), 439.

<sup>142</sup> Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah*, 62. Further discussion of the complex situation of the use of the term אֲשֶׁרָה with a definite article, as well as the complexities about which goddesses were possibly confused for Asherah by later scribes is undertaken by Hadley, 54-83. Of this passage Day notes that “Although the name Asherah here appears in the plural – whether denoting various local manifestations of Asherah or Canaanite goddesses generally is not clear – the parallelism with ‘the Baals’ (likewise denoting either local manifestations of Baal or Canaanite gods generally) clearly implies that Asherah was understood as a divine name.” Day, *Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan*, 45.

<sup>143</sup> Davies, “The Origin of Biblical Israel,” 141-147; on this note Lindars also states that “the stories were arranged in an artificial sequence to produce a continuous history.” Barnabas Lindars, *Judges 1-5. A New Translation and Commentary*, (Edinburgh, T&T Clark, 1995), 125.

<sup>144</sup> This passage is identified positively as originating with Dtr by Antony F. Campbell, *Of Prophets and Kings: A Late Ninth-Century Document (1 Samuel 1-2 Kings 10)*, (Washington, DC: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1986), 181, n. 37, and also by Robert H. O’Connell, *The Rhetoric of the Book of Judges*, (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 16-20. O’Connell states that “these passages reflect the rhetorical intention of a compiler/redactor to bring the hero stories of Judges into a framework in which actions and motives could be assessed by the standards of YHWH’s covenant.” 19-20.

<sup>145</sup> Hadley states specifically that “Judg. iii 7 may refer to either Baal and Asherah, or perhaps male and female deities or other cults in general. This passage is probably part of a Deuteronomistic redaction, introducing actual judge stories. It is in the characteristic style of Dtr, in which the children of Israel do evil in the sight of Yahweh by forsaking him and following after other gods, which inevitably leads to punishment. However, in many of these ‘summary’ passages (Judg. ii 13; I Sam. vii 4; and xii 10), the gods in question are ‘the Baalim and the Ashtaroth’, and not the Asherah. In fact, two versions (the Syriac and Vulgate) imply *ha’astarot* for Judg. iii 7. It remains to determine which may have been the original rendering, asheroth or Ashtaroth. The Peshitta has an initial ’ with Astarte here, which may indicate that asheroth is more original. It is easier to see how asheroth got corrupted to Ashtaroth than the reverse”, Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah*, 63.

centralised in any way. It is this 'local' or individual form of piety that is an important factor in the prevalence of these figurines. Asherah is portrayed throughout the DH as a threat to Yahwism in a way that constantly conflated the deity herself with her iconography.<sup>146</sup> Thus, it is clear that while her iconography is endemic to an environment in which worship can be conducted away from the Temple in Jerusalem, it is potentially 'robbing' that Temple complex of valuable revenue. In this sense it is her, and not YHWH's, images and other cultic paraphernalia that are widespread throughout the land. Prior to Dtr's reforms, the cult of YHWH had not been entirely austere and image-free. As has been discussed above in chapter 3, archaeological excavation has uncovered a limited number of sites at which imagery, or at least *maššeboth* thought to be associated with YHWH, are present – least of all are the bull figurines from the northern sites such as the Bull Site at Dothan,<sup>147</sup> along with the other inscriptional evidence from a small number of locations.<sup>148</sup>

Judges 3:7 is didactic, representing the Deuteronomistic formula present in Judges to illustrate the apostasy and salvation cycle of Israelite history. Dtr have made use of the stories of the nation<sup>149</sup> and reworked them into a form which accentuates the benefits of their reforms. Similar formulations appear throughout Judges where the Israelites fall into

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<sup>146</sup> Crouch, *The Making of Israel*, 131.

<sup>147</sup> The details of which are covered by Zevit, *The Religions of Ancient Israel*, 176-180; Dever, *Did God Have a Wife?*, 135-136; Hess, *Israelite Religions*, 236; Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses and Images of God*, 118. This site appears to be a *bāmā* with associated *maššebea*, low surrounding wall (temenos), possible altar or collapsed *maššebea* and what Hess enigmatically refers to as "perhaps an additional cult object", 236, by which he might mean the remains of what could have been an incense stand or burner or what Zevit, in equally enigmatic fashion, describes as "an undefined bronze object", 178. Dever refers to this site as "a rather typical high place," 135.

<sup>148</sup> Such as the Khirbet el Qom and Kuntillet 'Arud inscriptions. Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah*, 84-155, undertakes a comprehensive overview of these. The specific association of these texts with YHWH is discussed by Hess, *Israelite Religions*, 283. Hess states that "As a result of the finds at Kuntillet 'Ajrud, Yahweh has become a member of the pantheon of Iron Age Palestine." He goes on to note that "it is unknown in Israel for Yahweh to have a cult symbol." 287. It is clear that Hess is considering theriomorphic and anthropomorphic symbols in this statement, and not *maššeboth* or other paraphernalia often thought to have been associated with YHWH such as a cherubim throne.

<sup>149</sup> Davies, "The Origin of Biblical Israel", 141-147.

apostasy, usually comprised of breaking the tenets of Dtr's law.<sup>150</sup> Thus, in this passage the people are presented as 'succumbing' to worship of 'the Baals and Asherahs' while forgetting the true God who continually saves them from their self-inflicted fates.

The problem faced by Dtr with all of these images, especially those of Asherah, is that they enabled people to set up shrines and altars in any place (בכל מקום),<sup>151</sup> and thus were difficult to regulate – and therefore tax and subsequently control. As a widespread form of iconography, Asherah was endemic to this system and representative of the ease with which independent worship could be conducted away from the central sanctuary. A complete zero-tolerance approach to all 'graven images' and external places of worship, was the only way to ensure that all potential revenue made its way to the Jerusalem Temple. When the northern kingdom fell to the Assyrians, Dtr were able to showcase their plight as an example of what would happen if the people refused to cooperate with their reforms. Deut. 16:21 also suggests that it was a common occurrence to set up *asherim* and *maššeboth* in honour of YHWH and companion deity, or it would not have been necessary to repeat such a prohibition so regularly.<sup>152</sup>

Deut. 16:21 also condemns a very important element in the creation of a *bāmâ* – a symbol of the deity to elicit that deity's presence, in order to make the sacrifice viable and convey blessing. Without such a symbol there could be no sacred space, no sacrifice, no presence of the Lord. That this text appears within the stipulations regarding justice in Deuteronomy is significant. It is not explicit, but the association of the passage with

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<sup>150</sup> This cycle is marked at the beginning with Israelite apostasy and subsequent punishment from the Lord and at the end with peace for a certain number of years. For example, Judges 4:1, 5:31b, 6:1, 10:3, 10:6 (in which the Israelites are described specifically as serving "the Baalim and the Ashtaroth"), 12:13-16, 13:1, 15:20.

<sup>151</sup> Including within a household setting.

<sup>152</sup> L.K. Handy, "The Appearance of Pantheon in Judah," in *The Triumph of Elohim*, 38-39. This is evident in passages such as Lev. 26:1; Deut. 27:15; 1 Kings 14:9 and 2 Kings 17:7-22.

elements of *bāmā* worship and the violation of justice is present within this text. While it is a loose association, the previous reference to “the place that he will choose” in v.16 contrasted with the aberrancy of erecting a stone and asherah speaks in favour of one centralised location for worship of YHWH. It is better to forego the sacrifice and slaughter animals purely for meat, than it is to sacrifice in a place and in a way that is offensive to YHWH.

Asherah was an Israelite goddess, autochthonous to the area, as well as having Phoenician and Egyptian forms.<sup>153</sup> The widespread nature of her iconography fell victim to the general aniconistic reform instigated by Dtr in their efforts to distinguish an identity ‘Israel’ from the heterogeneous population among which they lived. This distinction further developed into a system of classification for ‘Canaanite’ whereby it was used as a tool to condemn Asherah and her iconography. Consequently, there are grounds for suggesting that the theology in Dtr’s narratives intentionally associates Asherah with Baal in order to distance the goddess from YHWH.<sup>154</sup> The worship of Asherah was a long-standing practice in Israel and Judah as demonstrated by inscriptional and other archaeological data, while condemnation of Asherah on its own would have had a limited influence upon a people for whom tradition was handed down orally, and whose ancestral memory bore witness to the worship of Asherah, as is reflected in Jeremiah 44.<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> That Asherah was also known as Qudshu is outlined in Day, *Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan*, 48; Cross, *Canaanite Myth*, 33-34; Richard J. Pettey, *Asherah: Goddess of Israel*, (New York: Peter Lang, 1990), 30; a review of the literature regarding the identification of Asherah with Qudshu is undertaken by Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah*, 47-49; Wyatt debates the association of Asherah with Qudshu, “Asherah,” 185.

<sup>154</sup> This association is revealed in passages such as Judg. 3:7, 10:6; 1 Sam. 7:4, 12:10.

<sup>155</sup> Although the reference to the ‘Queen of Heaven’ in Jeremiah 44 does not necessarily refer directly to Asherah, it is evidence of widespread ongoing worship of at least one female deity by the Judahites. Given the Egyptian location of this passage, the ‘Queen of Heaven’ could have been a reference to Qudshu, who was synonymous with Asherah.

1 Kings 16:29-33 is also reflective of the Deuteronomistic prohibition of the longstanding Asherah elements in the cult of YHWH, especially in its association of the elements with the worship of Baal, for which there may have been widespread disapproval at the time in both Israel and Judah, as reflected in the minor prophets (Hosea for example, 2:8, 13, 16, 17, 9:10, 11:2, 13:1) as well as the major (Jeremiah 2:8, 23, 7:9, 9:14, 11:13, 17, 12:16, 19:5, 23:13, 27, 32:29, 35, 40:14). That such a move promoted the Deuteronomistic policy of centralisation is evident throughout these texts.

#### **VI.viii. Asherah and the Condemnation of the Queen Mother in Israel and Judah**

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The notion that a member of the royal family could have functioned specifically as a priestess of Asherah, as is demonstrated by Ackerman and Bowen,<sup>156</sup> adds weight to the notion that she was a legitimate deity in the official cult of Israel and Judah. This has been outlined by numerous scholars,<sup>157</sup> and evidenced by the widespread JPFs and inscriptions from Kuntillet 'Ajrud and Khirbet el Qom. Two queens fall into this category of *gēbîrâ* with explicit ties to the worship of Asherah - Maacah of Judah (1 Kings 15:11-13) and Jezebel of Israel (1 Kings 16:29-33 and 1 Kings 18:16-19). Each of these queens had a specific role to play in cultic matters, and is explicitly associated with Asherah in the texts.<sup>158</sup> The viability of such a role as that of the queen mother in official cultic practice is supported by the

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<sup>156</sup> Susan Ackerman, "The Queen Mother and the Cult in Ancient Israel," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 112.3 (1993), 385-401; Nancy R. Bowen, "The Quest for the Historical *Gēbîrâ*," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 63.4 (October, 2001): 608-610.

<sup>157</sup> Including, but not limited to, Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah*; Day, *Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan*, 43-67; Olyan, *Asherah and the Cult of Yahweh in Israel*; Pettey, *Asherah: Goddess of Israel*; Alice Lenore Perlman, *Asherah and Astarte in the Old Testament and Ugaritic Literature*, (University of California: Available through University Microfilms, Ann Arbor, 1978).

<sup>158</sup> Bowen outlines the political implications of the role of the *gēbîrâ*, noting that Maacah was removed from her post due to a *cultic faux-pas*. Bowen, "The Quest for the Historical *Gēbîrâ*," 610.

argument forwarded by Stavrakopoulou that the 'official' religion of Israel and Judah was a heterodox one, despite the objections to this in the biblical texts themselves.<sup>159</sup>

The activities of Maacah are condemned in 1 Kings 15:11-13, a passage which clearly reflects Dtr's polemic against iconography, and their iconoclastic stance toward it. This passage has been dealt with by numerous scholars, and explored from many different angles.<sup>160</sup> It is Ackerman, however, who has noted the importance of the role of the queen mother in the official Israelite cult.<sup>161</sup> As the cult's head female, commissioning a statue or other offering for Asherah would have been well within her rights. In this instance the offering was somehow unacceptable.<sup>162</sup> The objection in this passage is not with the goddess Asherah or worship of her *per se*, but with the overall form that such worship took. In the context of this argument the stress is placed on idols, rather than on other cultic practices, and it is reasonably non-specific. What if the idols made by Asa's ancestors had been either for, or of, YHWH? Dtr were unconcerned with this possibility, as according to their ideology all iconography, whether legitimately Yahwistic or not, was aberrant.

In this passage Maacah has an implied position as queen mother, a position which can be surmised to have been cultically powerful, perhaps even as the 'high priestess' of the

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<sup>159</sup> Stavrakopoulou, "'Popular' Religion and 'Official' Religion," 39.

<sup>160</sup> For example, Hennie J. Marsman concludes that this passage is a demonstration of the subordination of Asherah to YHWH, *Women in Ugarit and Israel: Their Social and Religious Position in the Context of the Ancient Near East*, (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 483-484; Hadley implies that the *mip̄set* was anthropomorphic, instead of taking the traditional form of a stylised tree, *The Cult of Asherah*, 64-66; Lowery speculates that the majority of the passage is "a deuteronomistic creation", but that there is a core present in the narrative which could represent a power struggle during Asa's reign, R.H. Lowery, *The Reforming Kings: Cults and Society in First Temple Judah*, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991), 94-95.

<sup>161</sup> Ackerman, "The Queen Mother and the Cult in Ancient Israel," 385-401.

<sup>162</sup> The terminology used suggests an asherah, but with some sort of difference which made it obscene. According to Mettinger's classifications, it can be supposed that a move was made from *de facto* aniconism to an actual physical representation of the deity which was considered taboo, however Ackerman notes that "we would be wrong were we to assume that Ma'acah's worship of Asherah in Yahweh's Temple was an anomaly", Ackerman, "The Queen Mother and the Cult in Ancient Israel," 390.

cult of Asherah – which links the Royal Family and official state religion with the cult of Asherah.<sup>163</sup> The term מפלצת is again unclear. In this context it may imply that making any kind of thing for Asherah is an obscenity in itself. On the other hand, it may be that there are certain types of things which are acceptable to erect in honour of Asherah, this particular one was unacceptable, and therefore considered ‘obscene’. In this way the text is obscure.

Here the Hebrew has מפלצת, from the verb פלץ meaning to ‘shudder with horror’ or to ‘tremble with terror’.<sup>164</sup> It is ‘a thing to shudder at’. According to Hadley, this passage and the parallel account in II Chronicles 15:16 are the only ones in which this phrase occurs.<sup>165</sup> There have been numerous theories regarding the nature of this ‘horrid thing’. Some scholars have suggested that it could have been a phallic symbol, Bes figure,<sup>166</sup> image of YHWH,<sup>167</sup> or an image for or of Asherah herself. Here it is possible to agree with Hadley that the last of these is the most likely explanation, as “The object is here cut down and burned.

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<sup>163</sup> Ackerman explores the possibility of the queen mother holding the role of high priestess of Asherah. She notes the power basis of the queen mother: “An identification of the queen mother with Asherah, that is, could give to the *gēbîrâ* power and authority which, like the king’s, originate in the world of the divine. Such a divine legitimization would then allow the queen mother to function as the second most powerful figure in the royal court, superseded only by her son, the king.” Ackerman, “The Queen Mother and the Cult in Ancient Israel,” 401. That this power was not necessarily exercised by all queens in both Israel and Judah is noted by Zevit, *The Religions of Ancient Israel*, who states of 2 Kings 11 that Athaliah “did not play the role in Judah that Jezebel played in Samaria”, 467, in being apparently not associated with the temple of Baal destroyed in that passage, although she was put to death for other reasons.

<sup>164</sup> Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 814.

<sup>165</sup> Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah*, 64-5.

<sup>166</sup> Bes was a common apotropaic deity in the ANE, sporting a troll like countenance. George Hart, *A Dictionary of Egyptian Gods and Goddesses*, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Inc., 1986), 58-61; H. te Velde, “Bes,” in *Dictionary of Deities and Demons*, 330-331.

<sup>167</sup> Here Hadley interjects with a question: “But if so, why does the text then state that it was for Asherah (unless Dtr wished to mask the truth, but there is no basis for this view)?” *The Cult of Asherah*, 65. There may be basis, and there are two possible alternative interpretations for this passage. The first is that Maacah made something ‘horrid’ for Asherah, and that it was something to do with the goddess or her cultic paraphernalia. The second is that Maacah made something for YHWH, and that the Dtr polemic against *all* iconography came to the fore and they transplanted Asherah into the tradition in the place of YHWH to serve as a further condemnation of the practice. Of course, if it can be considered that Asherah and YHWH were worshipped as a divine couple, possibly in conjunction, then it could be plausible that Maacah would have made for Asherah an image of her husband, but that this was frowned upon because of the new Deuteronomistic bans on YHWH’s iconography. It is also possible that Dtr had their own motivations for condemning *any kind* of construction of cultic imagery in favour of promoting a centralised cult.

This is the same treatment which is often afforded to the wooden cultic object of the goddess, and so it is reasonable to assume that the *mipleset* was similar to an asherah.”<sup>168</sup> However, the notion remains that this was the fate awarded to all cultic objects, and although the term כרת would appear to indicate something tree-like that is standing, it could also be used as a figure of speech to refer to the ‘felling’ of any cultic object that is in a position to be ‘pushed over’ and is flammable.<sup>169</sup> Ackerman has also considered the possible foreign origin of the *mipleset*:

Ma’acah’s foreign heritage, however, need not predicate the conclusion that the Asherah cult Ma’acah promoted was foreign; nor does the fact that King Asa regarded Ma’acah’s worship as heterodox necessarily imply such. In fact, certain biblical and archaeological evidence suggests that Asa’s opinion was not normative in Judah. A case can instead be made that Asherah worship was customary among the populace. S.M. Olyan has even argued that the worship of Asherah may have been part of the state cult; Asherah may have been worshipped, that is, along with Yahweh in official Judahite religion. Note in this regard that Ma’acah’s image devoted to Asherah stood in all likelihood in Yahweh’s Temple in Jerusalem; the Jerusalem Temple is at least the logical place for a member of the royal family to erect a cult statue, first, for reasons of proximity, as Temple and palace stood side by side in Jerusalem, and second, because the Temple essentially functioned as the private chapel for the monarch.<sup>170</sup>

Ackerman’s speculation about placement, however, cannot be considered conclusive due to the prevalence of shrines situated across the countryside. Nor is this entirely the point. Maacah may have positioned her מפלצת in the Temple, but it does not automatically follow that it was culturally either legitimate or illegitimate. It is unlikely that the symbol of a foreign deity would have been erected in the nation’s primary sanctuary with the sanction of the royal family.

Reed notes that this passage is a genuine witness to the presence of Asherah in the official Israelite cult, although he is not quite so specific:

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<sup>168</sup> Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah*, 65.

<sup>169</sup> As is discussed in Wiggins, “Of Asherahs and Trees,” 164-169.

<sup>170</sup> Ackerman, “The Queen Mother and the Cult in Ancient Israel,” 390.

There is nothing in the text that tells how long after the incident it was written, but the passage may be taken to be an authentic reference to the worship of Asherah as existing in the kingdom of Judah as early as the tenth century B.C.<sup>171</sup>

Reed also references Morgenstern's opinion that Maacah was making an image of YHWH to place in the Temple to replace one that had been stolen by the Egyptians earlier, and that under the influence of the prophets who hated idolatry, Asa forcibly removed it.<sup>172</sup> Reed goes on to state that

The report of Shishak's raid (1 Kings 14:25f.) does not mention the removal of Yahweh's idol, nor is it certain that Solomon had constructed such an object. Furthermore, the mipleset was made by Maacah, not for Yahweh, but for Asherah or as an Asherah. The sin involved then, would not be that of dedicating an idol to Yahweh, but would be instead the violation of Yahweh by placing an image of a pagan goddess in his temple.<sup>173</sup>

However, Morgenstern's argument is persuasive, in that it is not impossible that those objectors to idolatry, who are the same as those who have influenced Asa, are the ones who redacted, and in part wrote, this very text. Therefore, it is perfectly reasonable to presume that they would attempt to eliminate any instance of iconography from the text, and in those instances where it could not be entirely replaced, that they alter it to reflect their

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<sup>171</sup> William L. Reed, *The Asherah in the Old Testament*, Fort Worth, (Texas: Texas Christian University Press, 1949), 60.

<sup>172</sup> Reed, *The Asherah in the Old Testament*, 60.

<sup>173</sup> Reed, *The Asherah in the Old Testament*, 60-61. That Asherah was a legitimate Israelite goddess is demonstrated above, and also in Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah*, 54-83; Pettey, *Asherah: Goddess of Israel*, in particular his one page introduction for this assertion, 1, 203-211, although Pettey considers Asherah's presence in the cult of YHWH somewhat syncretistic; Olyan, *Asherah and the Cult of Yahweh in Israel*, 70-74; Day, *Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan*, 42-67; Dever, *Did God Have a Wife?*, 176-251; Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess*, 38-50. Of Patai's work Dever states "The new archaeological data that I present here... only confirm what Patai knew all along about the existence of a 'Hebrew' Goddess. How did he know it? Partly because he was alone among scholars then in having access to the rich lore of medieval Rabbinical scholars." *Did God Have a Wife?*, 208. That Asherah was most likely a legitimate Israelite deity but that there is not enough evidence to support a partner/consort relationship is detailed in Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses and Images of God*, 369-370.

polemics and support their policy of centralisation. This is well established in Dtr studies, and this is not the only text where such ‘glosses’ are present.<sup>174</sup>

Jezebel appears in 1 Kings 16:29-33, which also presents Ahab as particularly despicable. According to the text, he married a foreigner and established an altar to Baal in the temple of Baal which he built. The text states that until this time there was no altar to Baal in Samaria. The reference to the asherah is inserted into this text as if it were an afterthought, which Campbell admits may have been the case, attributing the insertion to a later redaction.<sup>175</sup> In this way the asherah is associated with Baal, and thus also with aberrant ‘external’ sanctuaries and the iconography present within them.

It is unclear why Dtr should take exception to Ahab’s marriage, until seen in the light of the Deuteronomistic proscriptions against marrying outside Israel.<sup>176</sup> There is no other objection to levelled against Jezebel besides her birth until later, when she is accused of committing idolatry in the form of a stylised image,<sup>177</sup> which she encouraged her husband to make for Asherah and place in the sanctuary (1 Kings 16:33). Jezebel is portrayed as paradigmatic of worshippers of other deities – they are all bad and cannot do any good. She is the prime example of how low one can go when one worships other gods. Jezebel is presented by Dtr as fitting well into the category of the queen mother. She is an important ‘head priestess’, and it is clear from the biblical texts that she held considerable social and political influence.

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<sup>174</sup> For example 1 Kings 18:19bβ as discussed below and as is asserted by Campbell, *Of Prophets and Kings*, 95, n. 73.

<sup>175</sup> Albeit with reservations. Campbell, *Of Prophets and Kings*, 93, n.68.

<sup>176</sup> Such actions are the cause of apostasy, as in the case of Solomon in 1 Kings 11:1-3.

<sup>177</sup> There is more call to consider the image stylised, as in the shape of a tree or other carving, rather than as an anthropomorphic structure. Day, *Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan*, 52-56; *contra* Patai, who argues that an anthropomorphic representation of the goddess is likely, 38-39.

Such authoritative and powerful women included in particular a queen mother who exerted herself in the matter of succession upon the death of her husband, the king, typically by promoting a younger son as heir to the throne in defiance of the generally acknowledged claim of the firstborn.<sup>178</sup>

In defence of Jezebel specifically Ackerman writes:

Despite Asa's censure, then, we cannot conclude that the *gebira* Ma'acah introduced a foreign cult into the Jerusalem court. Nor, I would argue, should Jezebel, another queen mother who is often regarded by commentators as introducing an alien cult of Asherah into Israel, be so accused. Instead, I suggest that she, like Ma'acah, worshipped Asherah while *gebira* as part of the state cult of the northern kingdom.<sup>179</sup>

Given the legitimacy of the cult of Asherah throughout Israel and Judah, a female member of the royal family could very well have been heavily involved with this aspect of the cult.<sup>180</sup>

Jezebel also appears as a major cultic player in 1 Kings 18:16-19. However, this appearance may be the result of a Deuteronomistic gloss<sup>181</sup> and an attempt to associate her with Baal instead of with YHWH.<sup>182</sup> It is a purely polemical association. Hadley notes that the LXX mentions the prophets of Asherah again in v.22, and that some transference could have eventuated between the versions; however, there is no substantial textual evidence to justify this substitution. This is an influence from the LXX, which makes it a contentious issue. Hadley notes that "This has led Reed to conclude that the original Hebrew text may have included Asherah in both verses, and that it is just as likely that the phrase 'the prophets of Asherah' was omitted from v.22 as it is that it was added to v.19."<sup>183</sup>

Alternatively, as it is with Chronicles, the translators of the LXX may have automatically

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<sup>178</sup> Ackerman, "The Queen Mother and the Cult in Ancient Israel," 385. As with the succession of Solomon to the kingship after David (for example 1 Kings 1).

<sup>179</sup> Ackerman, "The Queen Mother and the Cult in Ancient Israel," 392.

<sup>180</sup> Ackerman states that "There was, that is, an Asherah cult of some sort in Samaria during the bulk of Ahab's monarchy, and the king participated in it. Jezebel, as Ahab's wife, may well have also participated in it as part of her obligations of marriage." "The Queen Mother and the Cult in Ancient Israel," 393.

<sup>181</sup> Campbell considers this as part of the anti-Jezebel redactional layer, *Of Prophets and Kings*, 95, n. 73.

<sup>182</sup> Smith, "God Male and Female in the Old Testament," 335-336.

<sup>183</sup> Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah*, 66. Reed also states that "It is possible that the Hebrew text originally contained both references to these devotees of Asherah; at least, it is as likely that *nby'y h'srh* of verse 22 was accidentally lost as it is that the phrase was added to verse 19." Reed, *The Asherah in the Old Testament*, 55.

equated Baal with Asherah, as this appears to have been a very common post-exilic cultic development.<sup>184</sup> As for speculation on the implications of omission or addition of Asherah in this passage, it may be relevant to note the following: all the people of the area were to attend this contest, there is no mention of any elimination of Asherah or *asherim* from the cult in the following generations of the monarchy; Elijah makes no further objections to the cult of Asherah. It can therefore be concluded that Elijah wanted all those affiliated with the cult of YHWH present at the contest to witness the splendour of their God, and this would naturally include the prophets of Asherah. Thus, Asherah's presence in v.19 is simply a call to witness, and not take part. This explains her absence from v.22. That Asherah was later polemicised as part of the centralisation campaign is attested by her close association with Baal in the progression of this passage.

Reed has taken these verses in conjunction with 1 Kings 16:33 to demonstrate that, at some point at least, the term Asherah was identified as both a goddess and a cultic object. "If this passage refers to the goddess, and the first one mentions the object, then it is apparent that at a very early time the word was used with a double meaning."<sup>185</sup> Reed has also noted that the biblical evidence seems to suggest that the cult of Asherah was not known in northern Israel until after 874 BCE, during the reign of Ahab, and that therefore it seems to credit the instigation of the cult with the arrival of Jezebel. However, Reed concludes that this is highly unlikely, as the evidence from the biblical passages pertaining to Judah cite many instances of the worship of Asherah, beginning as early as the reign of Asa,

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<sup>184</sup> Day states that "Eventually the Jews seem to have forgotten what exactly the Asherah was." *Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan*, 53.

<sup>185</sup> Reed, *The Asherah in the Old Testament*, 61.

although presumably originating from an even earlier period.<sup>186</sup> The significance of this is that while there is much debate regarding the longevity of the worship of Asherah in Israel overall, 1 Kings 18:16-19 does not necessarily represent an example of a polemic against it. It can just as easily be interpreted as evidence for the health, persistence, and widespread acceptance of the cult of Asherah in the north, as it can be interpreted as a passage condemning that same practice. In concluding that it is a polemic against Asherah it must be argued that Dtr would not have allowed a pro-Asherah reference to subsist within the texts. It must, by that reasoning alone, have been intended to associate Asherah with Baal in the minds of the text's audience. This is consistent with other associations of the same type.

#### **VI.ix. Asherah and the Polemics of Centralisation**

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Lists of polemics which include Asherah and serve to summarise Dtr's reforms appear within the assessments of the Kings. Among these are the account of the capture of Israel by the Assyrians, and the sins occasioned by the actions of Manasseh. These include 1 Kings 14:15, 14:23, 16:33; 2 Kings 13:6, 17:10, 17:16-18, 21:3-7 and the converse in the form of praise for the actions of Josiah in 2 Kings 23:14-15.

2 Kings 13:6 is a very common review of the kings of both Israel and Judah, and derives from the point of view of the Judean writers who were theologically opposed to iconography.<sup>187</sup> As has been demonstrated thus far, the 'sacred pole', or אֲשֵׁרָה, was a staple cultic practice in both the north and south, and thus Jehoahaz may very well have been

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<sup>186</sup> Reed, *The Asherah in the Old Testament*, 61-62. That Asherah was a later introduction to the cult is also refuted by Ackerman, who specifically discusses the possibility that Maacah brought the cult of Asherah into Judah herself, "The Queen Mother and the Cult in Ancient Israel," 390.

<sup>187</sup> Zevit, *The Religions of Ancient Israel*, 467.

upholding the Yahwistic cult by maintaining the *asherim*. Dtr utilise such statements to demonstrate the futility of the worship of asherah (and other iconography) since the Assyrians decimated Israel. Such tragic events provided them with the perfect mechanism by which to compel the Judean populace into complying with their reforms, which required the elimination of all imagery, cultic objects, and other deities aside from YHWH. Dtr's goal was to establish formal worship solely at the Temple in Jerusalem, and in the end they were able to successfully promote such practices, albeit for a brief time.<sup>188</sup> The problem was that by the time of the fulfilment of this goal, the Temple had been destroyed by the Babylonians. It could also be considered that this tactic was not fully effective, as it took a horrific event such as Babylonian invasion and conquest for Dtr's ideological goals to be fulfilled.<sup>189</sup> Many would not consider this a "victory" by any standards, although it was a vindication of Dtr's goals nevertheless.

2 Kings 17:16-18 serves as an amalgamation of the majority of the Deuteronomistic polemics – against iconography in general, *asherim* and tauromorph imagery in particular; human sacrifice, worship of other deities, and a hint of an objection to ritual prostitution. These are the reasons, the Deuteronomists say, for the Assyrian invasion of Israel and the suffering which followed for its people. This passage is clearly written from a position of

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<sup>188</sup> The centralisation campaign suffered its greatest blow with the loss of the Second Temple and the priesthood which served it in 70CE.

<sup>189</sup> It took the complete annihilation of Judah and its institutions for the reforming Deuteronomists to have a clean enough slate to be able to fully implement their reforms. The turmoil of the invasion and exile, and also the disruption of the 'return', would appear to have been integral to the full success of Dtr's ideology, although Lohfink considers this success to have been incomplete. He writes of Deuteronomy that "Much in the draft may have asserted itself after the exile, when Deuteronomy again became accepted as law; but at least one element had forever been severed from the total system: after the exile, there was never a restoration of monarchy. As the lack of one element affects all other elements in a system, the constitutional theory in Deuteronomy was never concretely realized. It remained a utopian theory." Norbert Lohfink, "Distribution of the Functions of Power: The Laws Concerning Public Offices in Deuteronomy 16:18-18:22," in *A Song of Power and the Power of Song: Essays on the Book of Deuteronomy*, edited by Duane L. Christensen, (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1993), 346.

hindsight, considering the dating for Deuteronomy and the DH. It also condemns many of the ritual practices which could have been carried out at *bāmôth*, ensuring by process of elimination that such places were rendered obsolete. The threat in v.18 was intended to frighten the populace into gravitating towards the new ‘orthodoxy’ of the Jerusalem Temple. This passage is, in essence, a listing of all the cultic practices which Dtr found repugnant or contrary to their own ideals. This enabled them to further their own cause, and reinforce their position when the same fate eventually befell Judah. The heavy bias in the final remark “None was left but the tribe of Judah alone” (17:18) clearly demonstrates the narrator’s point of view. This is an example of tribal triumphalism delivered in hindsight with the aim of highlighting the success of the Deuteronomistic reformation and urging its continuance.<sup>190</sup>

2 Kings 17:16-18 also mentions the ‘host of heaven’. YHWH was included in this host, the calves were for YHWH and the asherah was to honour his consort. There is a clear emphasis on the way in which the people made themselves worthless by engaging in “forbidden practices” and worshipping other gods. There is also the possibility that this passage, and others like it (such as 1 Kings 18:19), were written into the text *after* the return from exile as extra emphasis on an anti-Benjamite polemic.<sup>191</sup> Campbell has noted the complexity of v.17, but admits that it could have originated from the time of Josiah’s reform and campaign into Israel.<sup>192</sup> Texts such as this were provided with extra condemnatory

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<sup>190</sup> As implied by Davies, “The Origin of Biblical Israel,” 144-147.

<sup>191</sup> As noted by Davies, “The Origin of Biblical Israel,” 141-147; *contra* Campbell who is inclined to give an earlier date for v.17 at least. *Of Prophets and Kings*, 161, n. 40. That such polemics utilised the stories of the northern kingdom is postulated by Davies. He states that “The anti-Benjamite ideology found throughout the Judean canonical writings... includes material that may originally have had a Benjamite origin itself”, Davies, “The Origin of Biblical Israel,” 144; also Mario Liverani, who briefly mentions this connection in *Israel’s History and the History of Israel*, (London: Equinox, 2005), 178.

<sup>192</sup> Campbell, *Of Prophets and Kings*, 161, n. 40.

weight because the “returnees” wanted to regain (or perhaps gain in the first place) power and prestige for Jerusalem. Whichever line of argument is taken, one thing is certain – that the purpose of this passage is to loudly demonise the cultic practices of the northern kingdom of Israel in their entirety, in order to further the case of the reformers.

Further condemnation of cultic practices involving Asherah can be found in 2 Kings 21:3-7. The first sin of Manasseh in this list is the reestablishment of *bāmôth*. The constant priority of this ‘sin’ over all others in Dtr’s reporting is a clear indication of where their real concerns lay. This is immediately followed by an association with Baal, and the construction of an asherah is included in such a way as to appear a natural accompaniment to this aberrant deity. The section is then summed up with the Deuteronomistic place-name formula which is reiterated twice in the passage, once in v.4 and again in v.7. Campbell has confirmed the inherent Deuteronomistic nature of this passage,<sup>193</sup> although he notes that it is not consistent with the judgement formulas applied to previous monarchs.<sup>194</sup> It may be the case that this change is attributable to the fact that Manasseh was the grandfather of Dtr’s hero Josiah, and that drawing closer to Josiah’s time it was necessary for them to re-accentuate the aberrant practices which Josiah corrects. The comparison as the best king, the model of right behaviour, can then be made with the worst king in his grandfather Manasseh.<sup>195</sup> That this list of Manasseh’s sins begins with an action that runs counter to cultic centralisation is a telling point.

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<sup>193</sup> Campbell, *Of Prophets and Kings*, 182-183.

<sup>194</sup> Campbell, *Of Prophets and Kings*, 183.

<sup>195</sup> Percy S.F. van Keulen, *Manasseh Through the Eyes of the Deuteronomists: The Manasseh Account (2 Kings 21:1-18) and the Final Chapters of the Deuteronomistic History*, (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 89-93. van Keulen notes the comparison drawn by Dtr between Manasseh and Ahab. Stavropoulou has also noted that the apparent failure of Josiah to rectify the sin committed by Manasseh in the sacrifice of humans is an important theological point which Dtr may have been attempting to make in order to justify the later fall of the kingdom.

2 Kings 21:3-7 details Manasseh's creation of an image, a *pesel* (לִּפְסֵל), of or for Asherah. That the goddess and not the cult object is referred to here is clear, although the remainder of the passage is obscure. There is much discussion regarding the nature of this *pesel* and the times of placement and creation of this 'image', although few conclusions are reached.<sup>196</sup> Pettey notes that there is no other instance in the biblical texts of the term *pesel* being applied to another deity.<sup>197</sup> It appears to be an actual image of the goddess, rather than a stylised pole or other object. Some arguments revolve around the possibility that this was the first time that an Asherah statue or Asherah paraphernalia had been placed in the Temple,<sup>198</sup> but this is clearly not the case, as it is known that there were *asherim* dedicated to YHWH by the altar in the Temple by this time, and that it is clear from other biblical passages and archaeological evidence, such as the Kuntillet 'Ajrud and Khirbet el Qom inscriptions, that YHWH and Asherah were commonly worshipped together, and by logical extension even in the Temple in Jerusalem. It is possible that this is another editorial gloss, designed to focus attention on the Asherah and her iconography as negative in YHWH's eyes, or to present her in contrast to YHWH.<sup>199</sup> 2 Kings 21:3-7 also functions to promote pro-Jerusalem ideology, emphasising its special status as chosen by the Lord as either a major cultic site or as the only legitimate place of worship and sacrifice in Judah and Israel. This is set against the northern cultic sites, and direct reference is made to the major figures of

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Stavrakopoulou, *King Manasseh and Child Sacrifice: Biblical Distortions of Historical Realities*, (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co., 2004), 40-43.

<sup>196</sup> Hadley states of this *pesel* that "It is evidently some type of image, perhaps anthropomorphic", *The Cult of Asherah*, 68-9.

<sup>197</sup> Pettey, *Asherah: Goddess of Israel*, 132. Pettey's line of argument leads him to conclude that "the Asherah is not only an idol, but a goddess worshiped by the people in the Jerusalem Temple. They considered her to be the consort of Yahweh." 133.

<sup>198</sup> M. Haran, *Temples and Temple-Service in Ancient Israel*, (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1985), as cited in Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah*, 68.

<sup>199</sup> Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, 285-287; Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah*, 68.

David and Solomon, who ruled before the north-south divide, in order to substantiate this claim.

## VI.x. Conclusion

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When considering this data, it becomes evident that אֲשֵׁרָה can be taken to refer to a goddess in parts of the Hebrew Bible,<sup>200</sup> and that Dtr consistently refer to an asherah in the Jerusalem Temple.<sup>201</sup> The Judean bias in these texts is a strong indication that the final redactors of these texts were Judean Deuteronomists, and that their ideology did not originate in the north. This same redactional bias makes it impossible to know for certain whether Dtr initially objected to an actual worship of Asherah and her iconography in the north, or were condemning a very local aspect of cultic worship.<sup>202</sup> It is clear that the cult of Judah incorporated the goddess, as is demonstrated through the Judean Pillar Figurines and the inscriptions from Kuntillet 'Ajrud and Khirbet el Qom, which indicates that at least some of Dtr's objections were aimed at southern practices. The example of the Assyrian conquest of Israel made an opportune point of comparison for the rhetoric driving their reform. That the iconography of Asherah was a mechanism whereby non-centralised worship could be promoted is evidenced through the widespread nature of the JPFs. Therefore the logical conclusion to the question of the motives of Dtr in polemicising against Asherah is that worship of the goddess as part of the Yahwistic cult, along with its iconography, stood in the

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<sup>200</sup> For example Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah*, 7-11. Hadley states that "The most natural assumption is that Hebrew Asherah can be identified with Ugaritic Athirat, and that both are closely related to Amorite Ašratum... Furthermore, it may be determined that 'asherah' in the Hebrew Bible usually refers to the wooden symbol of this goddess, but may also refer to the goddess herself." 11; Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess*, 34-54. Patai has a tendency to take a surprisingly literal view of Israelite history as it is represented in the biblical text, interpreting narratives such as those of Judges in a literal light.

<sup>201</sup> Although this referral is indirect and cast in a polemical light, for example 2 Kings 21:7.

<sup>202</sup> Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses and Images of God*, 229-230.

way of Dtr's policy of a centralised religion and therefore, also by extension, of a centralised point of bureaucracy and fiscal accumulation especially for the 'banking' arm of the Temple complex. The worship of Asherah, as an easily portable and transferrable practice associated with uncertain areas of daily life, such as childbirth, is indicative of the mobile iconography which threatened the reforms of Dtr. Such mobility lent itself more naturally to worship in the home and external shrines and sanctuaries, which had a direct impact on the revenue available to the centralised Temple, just as it threatened the authority of the Temple priests and their ability to control the workings of their society.

# Conclusion.

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In order to satisfactorily bring all of the seemingly disparate aspects of this study together, a common element has been considered – economics. In order to demonstrate the way in which this can be applied to Dtr, this thesis has outlined the many aspects contributing to Dtr's changes in religious policy. The first chapter has therefore attempted to shed further light on the possible identity of Dtr, placing them within a viable historical context, outlining the themes which can be identified as common to their theologies, and linking them to the Levitical priesthood as part of a wider faction or movement focused on a reform of centralisation. Such an association serves to link Dtr to such fiscally profitable activities as tax collection. This chapter has also outlined the possible ways in which these themes could be viewed in an economic light – how, economically, aniconism and monotheism were of benefit financially to Dtr, how and why Dtr chose to alter the histories of the kings (or evaluate them, as the case may be) and of the history of the land to support their ideology.

Chapter two has outlined the way in which the identity 'Israel' was forged by Dtr, as distinct from the 'other' which was, primarily, the 'Canaanites'. Such rhetorical measures as Dtr were compelled to take were supported by the changes to law which they instigated, increasing penalties for idolatry in order to advance the aniconistic aspects of their reforms. This served to aid in the elimination of external places of worship, enabling a centralisation of bureaucracy, and thus also finance, in the Jerusalem Temple. This chapter has also provided an analysis of the development of the control of land from small family groups, possibly in the context of some form of larger community structure, to the accumulation of

that land by single families who grew increasingly wealthy, forcing other families into a form of fief system similar to *latifundia* whereby rent is charged on the land which they are allowed to work, but do not own.

Chapter three has focused on establishing the legitimacy of each of the elements which have been considered as eliminated by Dtr during their reforms, within the cult. These elements are *bāmôth*, *maššeboth*, and tauromorph representations of YHWH. This chapter has made a case not only for the concept generally of temple as bank and landholder, but that *bāmôth* most likely also functioned in these rolls. Thus, in eliminating *bāmôth*, the Jerusalem Temple complex was potentially able to greatly increase its revenue intake. Such changes were however not without their challenges, and necessitated a rewrite of the laws of sacrifice, judiciary, and finance.

It would seem that YHWH was, at some stage, represented by golden calf or bull statues. This is demonstrated through the ‘sin of Jeroboam,’ and is also intimated in the scene at Mt. Sinai in Exodus 32. Jeroboam maintained the traditional cult of Israel, rather than engaging in innovation as Josiah seems to have done under the influence of the Deuteronomists. Such iconography represents a portable expression of the deity, which Dtr may have found objectionable due to the avenues for expansion of cultic sites which it provided. The portable nature of most iconography, and the ability of *maššeboth* to precipitate the establishment of a sacred site, made them inimical to the Deuteronomistic aspirations for a centralised religious establishment in Jerusalem. It is for this reason that these previously acceptable aspects of Israelite cultic practice came under fire from Dtr, and were eventually excised from the cult. The Temple as a centralised banking institution and the sequestration of the revenue and assets of other temples and *bāmôth* meant an

increase in revenue through rent, interest on loans, money changing activities relating to the transportation of sacrifices into Jerusalem, and the accumulation of taxes and tithes.

Chapter four has focused on providing an analysis of tithing as reflected throughout the DH, especially as they pertain to the Levites, in an attempt to establish an economic basis for each area of Dtr's theology and subsequent policy. Economics cannot be considered as the only motivation for Dtr's reforms, but is one which certainly cannot be discounted. That Dtr were in some way motivated by economic gain is demonstrated through their focus on tithes throughout Deuteronomy and the DH. This is reinforced by their assessment of the kingship along lines which promote their centralised agenda – the abolition of competing sanctuaries and the cultic elements which promoted or gave rise to them. A study of the temple as bank in the ancient world serves to highlight the fiscal advantages of such a programme.

Therefore, Dtr were most likely a faction consisting of members from all areas of the upper echelons of Israelite life, but stacked in the favour of the Levites in particular. This is evidenced throughout the biblical texts in the emphasis that Dtr have placed on the importance of tithing to the Levites, and in establishing their primacy in cultic matters over and above the Aaronid priesthood. Regional Levites who did not go to the central sanctuary to serve, but who may have suffered a loss of income due to the reforms, were instead installed at the city gates in a new role as tax collectors, an activity which may have seen them in possession of ninety percent of collected revenue, while only ten percent went to the centralised institution.

Chapter five has further demonstrated this theme, considering biblical passages which reflect the Deuteronomistic policy of iconoclastic aniconism, and assessing the kings

according to their own policies rather than for what was the best political course for the survival of the country. However, Josiah's reign was the beginning of the end for Israel's foreign policy, as the kings who followed were unable to cope with the unstable political situation generated by the threat of invasion from Babylon. It is evident that Dtr were not as concerned with the long term policies which would ensure the ongoing safety of their people as they were with short term gains.

The goddess Asherah and her iconography has been considered in chapter six. She has been heavily polemicised within the biblical texts and is often associated with Baal, who was not the Israelite high god, and was never considered so in the first place. Such distinctions have been drawn by Dtr in an attempt to further their classification of 'Israel' as a 'people for YHWH' over and above the polytheistic 'other' which they identify as 'Canaanite'. The worship of Asherah and the widespread nature of her iconography is indicative of the prevalence of this 'other' in ancient Israel. Asherah was a goddess of fertility, and as such was associated with women's concerns and often worshipped in the home. Such portability of iconography, as evidenced in particular by the widespread nature of the JPFs, represented a threat to Dtr's centralised efforts in a more widespread and immediate way than even *maššeboth* or tauromorph imagery.

Therefore it can be concluded that the overall aim of Dtr was to gain control of the religious institutions of Israel and Judah. Such reform would have provided further control over the system of tithing and taxation, and also opened up further areas for the accumulation of revenue through the land-holding and 'banking' arms of the Temple complex. Iconography represented a portable means by which 'external' places of worship, included in which classification are sacrifice and tithing, could be conducted. As such,

iconography of all forms became a threat to Dtr's goals, and led them to embark upon a major iconoclastic campaign which saw the elimination of all deities beside YHWH, along with all imagery and symbolism related to that deity and all others. This resulted in the stress in such texts as Deut. 16:16 on not appearing before YHWH empty handed. The success of such an alteration was predicated upon the alteration of social and legal systems which provided for the further financial growth of the already affluent Levites, while also alleviating some of the difficulties faced by the population with such a system.

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